'Obama Statue' Found in Picture of Mars, says Researcher - Cryptozoology News

cryptozoologynews.com

By Cryptozoology News November 28th, 2014

A UFO researcher on Thursday said there is a "98% chance" that he has found the top part of a "humanoid sculpture" buried under the red surface of Mars.

Taiwan's ESL school owner Scott C. Waring was "searching for structures" on photographs of the planet when he found "this head".

"Most people are calling these rocks carvings, but I highly doubt that this is mere rock," he said. "But it's probably a 3D printed substance with tech printed inside."

The picture, snapped by the Mars Exploration Rover Spirit's camera between the sections Sols 620 and 622 in 2005 and available to the public at the Gigapan EPIC series website, shows a figure resembling a human face.

"From the way its standing up I would say that it is a full statue, but is buried from the shoulders down. Its standing perfectly upright. It looks humanoid, but hard to tell with a sculpture," explained Waring.

The human-looking rock stands near the Gusev crater. Credit: NASA/Gigapan

Internet users, rushing to comment on the "discovery", came up with different possibilities trying to explain the anomaly.

"We can clearly see that this relic does indeed resemble the 44th president of the United States," said Marie, a YouTuber by the name of *Paranormal Crucible* that uses the video website to postulate her theories.

But how is it possible that a statue of president Obama could be there? According to Marie, some conspiracy theorists believe that the American president is "a clone of an ancient Martian ruler who is also a descendant of an extraterrestrial royal bloodline".

"This same king was also reincarnated in ancient Egypt and was called Akhenaten," said the

blogger.

The controversy comes five months after NASA's release of a 330-page long document written by a group of scientists and scholars and edited by Douglas A. Vakoch, suggesting that certain art paintings and carvings on rock formations found on Earth could be the work of ancient alien visitations.

Waring, who has been keeping track of these type of abnormalities like these on his daily blog since he created it in 2012, believes the "sculpture" could be indeed part of an ancient culture that inhabited the Red Planet.

"It may just be the remains of an alien civilization that was hit hard by a competing alien race. Sure hope humanity never discovers such weapons," he said.

In early March, one person claimed to have found a Christian wooden cross he thought could be a tombstone on the Martian surface.

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'Vampire trucker' asking Utah judge to throw out evidence in alleged rapes

sltrib.com

By PAMELA MANSON The Salt Lake Tribune
First Published Dec 17 2014 09:24AM Last Updated Dec 22 2014 10:59 am

(| Courtesy Photo) Timothy Valfeades

Two commercial vehicle inspectors who conducted a routine check of a Salt Lake City man's semi truck last year at a weigh station in Minnesota testified Wednesday they thought it was odd that a 19-year-old female relative with him refused to make eye contact.

In addition, they noted that driver Timothy Jay Vafeades was talking a lot — which inspector Cynthia Harms said happens when someone "is trying to distract you."

"He would not let the female with him speak. He spoke for her," said Harms, adding that she felt something wasn't right.

Harms testified at a hearing in Salt Lake City before U.S. District Judge David Nuffer, who is considering a defense motion to throw out some of the evidence against Vafeades.

Vafeades, 54, a long-haul driver with a set of false vampire fangs, is charged with kidnapping and sexually assaulting two women, including the relative.

Defense attorneys are arguing that their client was held without reasonable suspicion on Nov. 26, 2013, in Moorhead, Minn., by the inspectors and that Minnesota State Patrol troopers also detained him without probable cause. Nuffer heard testimony on the matter on Wednesday and has scheduled a February hearing to hear arguments on the motion.

Harms and inspector Chad Olschlager both testified they became concerned after a computer check showed there was a 1999 protective order in Florida barring Vafeades from having contact with the relative. Although the order was 15 years old and the woman was no longer a minor, Olschlager flagged down Vafeades to stop him from driving out of the station while Harms called in Minnesota State Patrol troopers.

Trooper David Keenan testified that the protective order said Vafeades was to have no contact with the "minor" and that there was no expiration date on it. Florida authorities said the order was still in effect, Keenan said, and an assistant Clay County, Minn., attorney told him to arrest Vafeades.

Court documents allege authorities later found numerous images of child pornography on computer hard-drives confiscated from Vafeades' truck, named "Twilight Express."

The Forum of Fargo-Moorhead, a North Dakota-based newspaper, reported that the relative told an investigator with the Clay County Sheriff's Department that Vafeades had several pairs of dentures for himself that he kept in his truck, including a set with two front teeth sharpened into vampire fangs.

Vafeades was indicted in March 2014 by a federal grand jury in Utah on two counts of kidnapping, two counts of transportation for illegal sexual activity, one count of transportation of child pornography and one count of possession of child pornography.

Federal prosecutors allege in court documents that Vafeades kidnapped and abused the two women by sexually assaulting them nearly daily, filing their teeth with a power tool, and cutting and dying their hair.

In addition, FBI agents have identified four more alleged victims of Vafeades. Prosecutors say in a court document that they intend to introduce evidence at trial from these four women to show a pattern of conduct.

The alleged crimes against the six occurred from 1994 to 2013.

Vafeades is being held in the Davis County jail without bail.

pmanson@sltrib.com

The Salt Lake Tribune

111-year-old Woman Set Ablaze In Benue

December 19, 2014 informationng.com

Posted by: niyi November 20, 2012

Barely seven months after St. Roberts Catholic Church collapsed, killing at least 30 parishioners in Adamgbe, Mbayongo,Vandeikya, Benue State, tragedy struck again at the weekend when a 35-year old man, Mr. Tyoakaa Ijoho allegedly set 10 thatched houses ablaze killing a 111- year old woman Mama Martha Gyuse Bonko in the process.

Ijoho who lost his father to a snake bite recently was bitter and had gone to consult an oracle to ascertain the cause of the death of his father, a source say.

According to the source, the native doctor whom Ijoho consulted allegedly told him that some of his family members contributed to the demise of his father, a development which provoked him to leave his place of abode in Konshisha local Government area of the state and headed straight for his village where he set the houses on fire.

One of the villagers, Abraham Chafa told newsmen that his mother, Mama Mezaga Chafa, 75, tried to help the 111-year old blind woman out of one of the thatched houses but could not due to her age.

Speaking further, he said his mother, in an attempt to protect herself was compelled to dump the old woman who eventually was burnt to death by the fire which Ijoho had set, adding that Ijoho who left the community for the past eighteen years only reappeared that fateful day to set the village on fire.

Through the help of youths and vigilante men, he said, Ijoho was arrested and handed over to the police in Vandeikya while the body of Mama Martha Gyuse Bonko had been deposited at a private hospital in Tsar Mbaduku.

When contacted the state Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), DSP Daniel Ezeala said he was yet to be briefed about the incident. [PMN]

1. lemonplump
November 20, 2012 at 7:22 am

He left years ago and only returned to cause this terrible havoc? A woman God has blessed with long life? Evil is on the increase everyday. God save us.

Reply

2. Kyangma
November 20, 2012 at 8:17 am

This Ijoho of a thing together with his native doctor should be made to undergo some punishments of some sort so that others can learn not trust native doctors with all their

lies and deceptions. May the soul of Mama rest in peace!

Reply

3. Bafa®

November 20, 2012 at 7:04 pm

Sad one for the village,though history suggests the Tiv have always been a violent,combative&fiery lot. I guess a society can only get what it deserves...reap what it sows. It can only mirror itself! Sorry for d old woman,though she had to die eventually.

Reply

4. James Ovuakporaye

November 20, 2012 at 8:43 pm

Ijoho and his native doctor shuld be arrested forthwith for their callous attitude . The gallow of satan is waiting for them at the gate of hell

Reply

5. Rolex

December 27, 2012 at 11:54 am

OMG

Reply

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SEA GULLS' EXPERT IN AERIAL CRAFT

Could Give Pointers to Army Aviators.

Some six or seven years ago the Vineyard Gazette published its first story of the sea gulls, which, having discovered that the hard-surfaced roads serve well as a substitute for a rock, shatter scallops and quahaugs to bits by dropping them from the air to the surface of the highway. Since that time the Gazette has carried further stories, detailing the uncanny skill of these birds, who made allowance for wind velocity with the accuracy of an expert rifleman or airplane bomber, never missing the narrow road or failing to drop the shellfish from a height sufficient to shatter the shells. All of this may be verified.

Other newspapers have made similar discoveries about gulls in various places, and it has become quite the seasonable thing for them to carry an acount of the activities of those natural sky riders whenever the shellfish are easily obtainable and attract the birds. But the Gazette now presents a new angle on the Vineyard seagulls, together with the solution of a mystery that has for long been a puzzle to islanders.

For several years it has been noticed by passersby on the Edgartown-Oak Bluffs road that in the vicinity of Anthiers Bridge there are apt to be found the mortal remains of large rats at very frequent intervals. Where they come from, or what causes their death, has been a subject for discussion, as in many cases the carcasses are found where the wheels of passing cars could not have struck them, and moreover, they always bear the appearance of having been more or less mangled and torn. It has remained for Capt. Chester Robinson to solve the mystery, which the Gazette now publishes.

According to the captain, who is well versed in natural history, and has spent much time in observing the activities of sea birds, the ordinary sea gull is fond of rats and mice. The remains of shellfish, scattered along the road in this locality, act as bait, attracting these rodents from long distances. They hide in the beach grass when cars or pedestrians approach, but when the highway is clear they will scamper about the road, eating the fragments of scallop or quahaug that they find in the emptied shells.

At this juncture the highly efficient gulls get in their skilled and deadly work. Soaring aloft with a heavy quahaug in their beaks, they mount to an unusual height, and hovering and shifting their position, gauging the wind and drift to a nicety, they drop the shellfish with a precision that almost never fails to connect with the rodent below, knocking it unconscious or killing it outright on the spot, whereupon the gulls descend and feast on fresh meat.

The Vineyard may justly claim the first actual bomb-dropping gulls ever to be reported to date, and army aviators may pick up some valuable hints by studying these birds and their methods.—Vineyard Gazette.

BOMB-DROPPING SEA GULLS.

Some six or seven years ago the Vineyard Gazette published its first story of the sea gulls, which, having discovered that the hard-surface roads serve well as a substitute for a rock, shatter scallops and quahaugs to bits by dropping them from the air to the surface of the highway. Since that time the Gazette has carried further stories, detailing the uncanny skill of these birds, who make allowance for wind velocity with the accuracy of an expert rifleman or airplane bomber, never missing the narrow road or failing to drop the shellfish from a height sufficient to shatter the shells. All of this may be verified.

20 Elderly Killed in Mozambique over Witchcraft in 2011 - Who Forted? Magazine

By Dana Matthews on June 19, 2012

whofortedblog.com

20 Elderly Killed Over Witchcraft Allegations

An astonishingly high number of elderly people were killed in Mozambique between 2011 and 2012 over allegations of witchcraft. Many of them sexually and physiologically abused, not to mention deprived of food and water necessities.

Recently during the World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD), chairperson for the Third Age Form, Antoni Sitoe explained, "… witchcraft and other superstitious allegations are the leading cause behind the rising cases of violence against elderly people across the country." The number unfortunately are astonishingly shocking.

A recent study reported, 60 cases of violence against elderly people were reported in the first quarter of the year in over six provinces. These again, being the instances that were reported and not left unheard.

Another study conducted by NGO Help Age found an astounding 6 out of every 10 elderly women had been a victim of violence within their lifetime.

Many, including Janet Duffield, director of NGO Help Age, are helping to work towards adoption of a law that will protect many against violence.

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Company Delivers On Promise To Sell 'Actual B***S***'

The Huffington Post | By Andres Jauregui huffingtonpost.com

Posted: 12/15/2014 12:09 pm EST Updated: 12/15/2014 1:59 pm EST

About 30,000 people bought a hot steaming pile of truth in advertising this Black Friday, courtesy of Cards Against Humanity.

The folks behind the madcap card game, which bills itself as a "party game for terrible people," offered to send people "actual b***s***" in a special offer last month. The company explicitly said that anyone who bought the $6 holiday bundle should expect to open a box of poop from a live bull.

LAist reports:

> Even as game creator Max Temkin repeatedly tweeted out that it was just poop, people continued to buy. Before day's end, the poop had sold out.

Cards Against Humanity has pulled clever holiday pranks in the past, including 2013's "12 Weeks of Holiday B***S***." That fact may have fueled Internet rumors that this year's special package contained more of the same, or even a limited edition of the game.

But despite all that, the company appears to have delivered on its promise, as the above video shows.

The contents of the box appear to be dry and largely inoffensive, neither of which can be said of the humor in Cards Against Humanity.

People are reportedly re-selling the boxed poop on eBay for up to five times the sticker price.

Others panicked and wrote frantic emails to Cards Against Humanity asking for their money back. Those requests appear to have been denied, hilariously.

Although some companies will do it as a novelty, it's illegal to send feces to people via U.S. mail for the purpose of harassment.

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5 Insane (but Convincing) Theories About Dead Celebrities

Robert Brockway cracked.com

From the god-kings of ancient cultures to the revolving door afterlives of comic book characters, humanity has always been reluctant to accept the fact that even our best and brightest will eventually fade away. As millennia have passed and our cultural relationship with our leaders has shifted from "May He reign forever in the Heavens" to "Thanks, *Obama*," we have moved our death-eluding attentions to our celebrities. Any time some singer or actor croaks before they become old and uninteresting, you can bet your best Sunday butt that within hours, the Internet will be teeming with "they're still alive" theories, ranging from relatively sane speculation to the obligatory "they just went to their home planet" ramblings of the Tin Foil People.

Can you guess which end of the spectrum this column is going to be about?

#5. Bill Hicks Became Alex Jones, Conspiracy Theorist

Via Vimeo

If you're interested in stand-up comedy at all, chances are you've bumped into Bill Hicks. A master of dark observational comedy and an avid social critic, his star burned brightly throughout the early 1990s, until he was lost to pancreatic cancer in 1994.

Or was he?

Enter Alex Jones, whom you may know (and hopefully actively ignore) as the man behind InfoWars.com, the host of *The Alex Jones Show*, and "America's #1 conspiracy theorist." Did you know he's really Bill Hicks in disguise? Does *he* even know? God dammit, the New World Order has fooled us yet again!

Here's a completely reliable 33-minute video that utterly eradicates all possibilities of this *not* being true:

"*Superficial similarities in voice and physical attributes?* Hold the press, Greg, we have stumbled upon the most sacred of all truths."

Should you not have the time to watch the whole video (please don't -- I did, and you can actually feel your brain cells melting like sugar in the rain as they elaborate), this theory suggests that Hicks was actually kidnapped by the CIA, who brainwashed the left-leaning comedian and put his famously sharp tongue to a new use by turning him into a right-wing

propaganda machine.

What I love about this theory is not so much its subject matter; I suspect it would take a lot more than mere brainwashing to turn *Bill fucking Hicks* into a 9/11 truther muppet. It's how thoroughly it manages to serve Jones a taste of his own medicine by claiming that he, a dedicated opponent of all things Illuminati and whatnot, is actually nothing but a powerless puppet serving their secret agenda.

With this in mind, I wholeheartedly propose to any conspiracy enthusiasts who might be reading this: please, *please* make this "conspiracy theorists making conspiracy theories about other conspiracy theorists" thing an ongoing trend. It would even be worth the inevitable return of that annoying Xzibit meme.

#4. Michael Jackson, Master of Postmortem Disguise

Yvonne Hemsey/Hulton Archive/Getty Images

Whatever else he may have been, the late Michael Jackson always struck me as a confused and unhappy individual who was thrown into a very extraordinary life at a young age, and never quite figured out what to do with it. That's why it was no surprise to me that there are plenty of theories about him faking his death and moving on to live what in his head probably passed for a normal life.

What *was* surprising, however, is how many of these theories refuse the "away from the spotlight" angle altogether, and instead use his fake demise as an excuse to make him seem even weirder than he was in his known life.

There's the one that claims Jackson is still occasionally visiting the public eye under the guise of his longtime friend, a facial burn victim called Dave Dave.

Via True Michael Jackson
Feel free to insert your own "I can see the likeness" joke, because I sure as shit am not going to make one.

How about the one about Conrad Murray, the doctor facing heat over Jackson's death, actually being the singer in disguise, despite looking and sounding nothing like him?

"As you can see, they both clearly have eyes and shit."

Or the ones that claim Jackson was present at his own

funeral, disguised either as an old man or a blonde lady?

Because the first thing you do after staging your death is grab a wig and waltz into an event that will be seen by millions.

Most of these theories seem to draw from the fact that a few of Jackson's videos -- notably his *Thriller* zombie look and *Ghosts*, where he played a middle-aged white dude -- featured him in heavy makeup and prosthetics, which can obviously only mean that the man is both ready and willing to spend the rest of his life in various heavy disguises.

Look, the King of Pop was a great many things, and I get that tons of fans miss him. However, while he did on occasion dabble with prosthetic makeup in his videos, precisely none of said things was "master of disguise." The dude's recognizability was on par with Mickey Mouse's, and although he did on occasion try to hide his face from the public, his attempts at disguise tended to be less Sherlock Holmes and more like, well, *this*:

Josh Brasted/Getty Images Entertainment/Getty Images

Getty Images/Getty Images Entertainment/Getty Images
He could probably pass for LaToya, but that's it.

#3. D.B. Cooper Is ... Tommy Wiseau?

Sometimes, when it's 3 a.m., I like to read up on creepy and unexplained events, because I subconsciously hate the concept of sleep and wish to have as little of it as humanly possible. During one of these sessions, I bumped into a few articles about D.B. Cooper, Cracked article alum and noted 1971 plane hijacker who disappeared after parachuting into awful weather wearing just a flimsy business suit, while weighed down by a bag of cash and a set of massive brass balls.

Fast-forward half an hour, and I found myself staring at the mug of none other than Tommy Wiseau, the modern-day Ed Wood behind the cinematic un-masterpiece *The Room*. "Huh," went my tired brain, as I started backtracking the strange link path that had led me from death-defying robbers to Z-movie auteurs who don't understand the concept of playing catch. And holy shit, was the effort worth it. It turns out that there's an actual theory that D.B. Cooper survived his daring heist and went on to

become Tommy Wiseau, presumably financing his train wreck of a film with the stolen money.

Josh Brasted/Getty Images
Entertainment/Getty Images
Thus creating the perfect circle of trolling the world.

Of course, the whole idea is as flimsy as the script of Wiseau's masterpiece. This is because it was never meant to be taken seriously; the theory is actually just a joke from the webcomic *xkcd*, which was poking fun at conspiracy theorists' tendency to cherry-pick facts that suit their grand point (Cooper's disappearance with the money and Wiseau's apparent wealth and mysterious past; both men's strange accents) while glossing over the ones that don't fit (Wiseau would have to be at least 80 years old for the theory to work).

Via Wikipedia
Also, you'd think someone would have mentioned it if Cooper talked like a robot from a 1950s sci-fi movie.

I'm including this theory because, although online mentions of the whole Cooper/Wiseau thing are as yet fairly rare and often joking in nature, my gut tells me we might very well be witnessing the birth of an *actual* conspiracy theory. This thing is already out there, and all it takes is a single conspiracy enthusiast bumping into it and omitting the source for it to turn into the "real" deal. I wouldn't be at all surprised if, in a couple of years, everyone's Google search bar will auto-fill Wiseau's name with "is D.B. Cooper," and vice-versa. Fast forward a few more, and the guy will probably be an alien, too.

Jim Larkin/iStock/Getty Images
Which would only confirm the suspicions of everyone who has actually seen *The Room*.

Then someone will make a porn parody out of it, which is when the Internet will finally realize how much humanity sucks and quit on our ass.

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5 Insane (but Convincing) Theories About Dead Celebrities

Robert Brockway

cracked.com

Paul Natkin/Archive Photos/Getty Images

Hey, it's a list of fake celebrity deaths -- *of course* this guy had to show up eventually.

Andy Kaufman earned his street cred as the patron saint of trolling and a comedian/performance artist extraordinaire by actively messing with the public. As a byproduct of his antics, he developed a reputation as one of the least-trustworthy people in existence. So when this fit, non-smoking, 35-year-old man was diagnosed with aggressive lung cancer and died just three months later in May 1984, it wasn't exactly a surprise that not everyone bought the story.

Even today, theories about Kaufman faking his death and waiting to resurface any minute now with a grin and a punchline are floating around, no matter how readily available his death certificate is online.

Ron Galella/Ron Galella Collection/Getty Images

When one of your jokes is wrestling women for four solid years, people are bound to take everything you do with a pinch of salt.

What warrants the inclusion of this known-ass theory on this particular list is the how, for the first time, we have actual details on the absurdly complicated fashion in which Kaufman *might* have pulled off his fake death stunt. According to the Kaufman's frequent co-conspirator Bob Zmuda and girlfriend Lynne Marguiles, the comedian had a lifelong fascination about staging his own death, which is what eventually led him to pull off the stunt in 1984. Zmuda and Marguiles claim that Kaufman managed to locate a terminal cancer patient who looked like him, and painstakingly changed his own appearance and mannerisms to fit those of the dying man in mere months.

In what he and Zmuda came to call "the dying routine," Kaufman lost vast amounts of weight, shaved his hair, coughed non-stop and deliberately leaked photos of his frail state. When the lookalike died, it was only a matter of burying him in place of the actual Kaufman, who proceeded to disappear from everyone who knew and loved him. Ha, classic! According to Zmuda, only he was in on the trick; Kaufman's parents both passed away thinking their son

was dead. In fact, Zmuda claims he only came out with the allegedly real version of the events (along with a bunch of other less unsavory tales about Kaufman) after both of the comedian's parents were dead, and also because the time limit Andy set for his death exile -- 30 years, max -- expired in May, 2014.

Don't get me wrong; I have as much respect for Kaufman's stunts as any comedian, and a part of me would love to see the man return and once again unleash his never-depleted bag of tricks on the world. Even so, I really, *really* want the whole death thing to be true if *this* is the alternative. There's a fine line between an awesome long con and complete, sociopathic disregard for everyone you love, and frankly, Zmuda's version of events is pooping all over said line.

#1. John F. Kennedy, Assassination Survivor

John F. Burns/Archive Photos/Getty Images

November 22, 1963 is forever remembered as the day of what is arguably the most famous and well-covered assassination in history. The 450,000 or so theories surrounding the death of President John F. Kennedy are a conspiracy enthusiast's heaven. By now, there are so many angles to the story that you can find a way to fit absolutely any theory you're into this week in the mix. Still, even the most hardcore "Illuminati molemen pooped bullets at him from a hidden foxhole on the Grassy Knoll" creeps do acknowledge that there *was* an assassination. No one is going around stating that Kennedy is still walking around today. That would be insane.

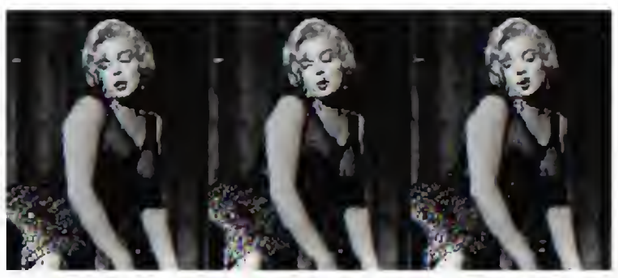
After all, he died in his sleep in 2011, at the tender age of 94.

UniversalImagesGroup/Universal Images Group/Getty Images
The real reason Presidents look more and more stressed as their term progresses is that he liked to sneak into their bedroom at night and pull a Jacob Marley on them.

Oh, and at least one person is claiming that JFK was still alive as of early 2013.

I accidentally dropped some brain bleach on my Lunatic-English-Lunatic dictionary in the aftermath of my last celebrity conspiracy column, so my understanding of loon-tongue is a little rusty. From what I can tell, these theories rely largely on the fact that Kennedy still had a pulse and was attempting to breathe when they brought him in the hospital. The extent of his alleged recovery varies -- the "alive in 2013" guy insinuates that JFK's post-Dallas life was spent as more or less a vegetable, while the other,

rather more ... elaborate theory claims he lived the rest of his life in a relatively normal fashion, slightly brain damaged but fully capable of communication. He recuperated on Aristotle Onassis' private island (while the latter married his wife, apparently), and proceeded to live under various aliases, secretly discussing matters with other Presidents and occasionally meeting old acquaintances such as Marilyn Monroe (who also faked her death, because of course she fucking did).



Keystone Features/Moviepix/Getty Images
She rendered herself totally unrecognizable by calling herself "Norma Jean."

While I personally enjoy the idea of a cranially-restructured JFK secretly Forrest Gumping his way through history, it must be noted that this is goddamned impossible. Although it *is* true that Kennedy's heart was still beating and his body was gasping for air, he was essentially a goner when he arrived to Parkland Memorial Hospital. Dr. Robert McClelland, who was a surgeon on duty when Kennedy came in, could look directly into the President's skull, and he saw that the back of his right cerebral hemisphere completely missing, while other head bits were, uh, plopping onto the gurney. And while it's admirable that some people are willing to assume 1960s surgeons were able to magically puzzle him back into the land of the living, I feel it's safe to say that conspiracy nuts would stand on sturdier ground by positing a theory that Yondu from *Guardians of the Galaxy* magic-bulleted the man with that whistle arrow of his.

Special thanks to Amanda Mannen for her suggestions in this article. Pauli Poisuo is a Cracked freelance editor and weekly columnist. Join his gang on Twitter and Facebook.

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7 terrifying mystery beasts that never existed: From real-life Gollum to Owl Man of Cornwall

mirror.co.uk

7 terrifying mystery beasts that never existed: From real-life Gollum to Owl Man of Cornwall

- Dec 15, 2014 18:12
- By Kara O'Neill

After the Beast of Bodmin Moor was revealed as a domestic cat, we look at seven other scary creatures that turned out to have perfectly reasonable explanations

False alarm: The Beast of Bodmin is not the only case of mistaken identity

SWNS / unknown

The mysterious animal that terrified families in Cornwall for 30 years has been identified, but it's a far cry from the decades of frightening rumours.

After numerous sightings and countless stories of livestock being slain, the so-called Beast of Bodmin Moor became one of Britain's most feared animals.

But now, new records have revealed that the terrifying creature of folklore is nothing more than a 12-inch cat.

A six-month Government investigation in 1995 found there was "no verifiable evidence" of exotic cats loose in the UK.

And after spending the equivalent of £84,000 examining photos and videos, the legend of the 'beast' was eventually revealed to be a black cat about 12ins tall.

Panic over.

So after this three decade-long case of mistaken identity, we look at seven other horrifying creatures that all turned out to have perfectly reasonable explanations.

Owl Man

Mythical: Owl Man sightings are thought to be Giant Eagle Owl

The terrifying Owl Man was sighted numerous times between 1976 and 1995 in and around the village of Mawnan in Cornwall.

Described as a large winged creature with pointed ears and red eyes, the beast is thought to be the size of a man with black pincer-like claws.

But despite the horrifying accounts, it's a simple case of mistaken identity and the Owl Man sightings were actually just an escaped eagle owl, a species that can grow more than two feet long with a six feet wing span.

Demon of Dartmoor

Kamen Rider / Getty

Boar off: Demon of Dartmoor is thought to be a large, hairy wild boar

A mysterious creature has long been spotted prowling the stark landscape of Hound Tor on Dartmoor.

Inspiration for the Sherlock Holmes stories, as well as urban legends, this large four-legged beast is rumoured to have a blood-curdling howl and horrific red eyes.

But while the myth might be much more interesting, it is much more likely that the bear-like creature is just a hairy wild boar.

Martin Whitley / Getty

Gollum

This creature doesn't even have a proper name, but nevertheless it frightened the life out of one Chinese tourist when they spotted it after nipping into the undergrowth for a quick toilet break.

The human-like creature bore a striking resemblance to Lord Of The Rings character Gollum, and appeared to be holding a weapon in its hand.

The 'monster' turned out to be a actor in costume

It was later revealed that the creature was actually an actor who was given prosthetic features and lifelike make up for a filmed advertisement.

Sea Monster

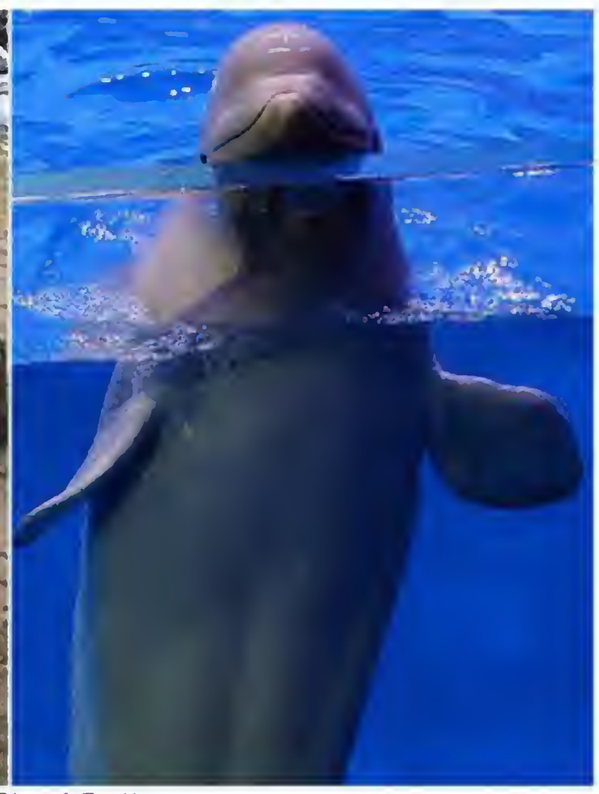
Panic over: It's just a beluga whale

When a mysterious skeleton washed up on a beach in Russia, it had locals convinced it was proof that terrifying sea monsters live in our oceans.

Initial tests suggested that the skeleton wasn't a fish, alligator or crocodile, leaving many people baffled as to the origin of the decaying carcass.

But after being taken away for more in-depth analysis, marine specialists revealed it was in face the skeleton of a large beluga whale.

Yeti



XclusivePics / Getty

Also known as the Abominable Snowman or Bigfoot, sightings of this mysterious beast have been recorded in the Himalayas for centuries.

But when 'yeti' hair samples were reportedly found, tests to discover their origin set to change the course of history.

Unfortunately, it revealed the far less exciting prospect that the mysterious creature was a hybrid animal, thought to be a cross between polar bears and brown bears.

El Chupacabra

Jennifer Whitfeld / Getty

Mistaken identity: The 'alien like' creature is just a coyote with mange

It's a relative newcomer to the mythical monster world, but since stories first surfaced in Puerto Rico in 1995 of a blood thirsty goat sucking vampire, it has been the go-to explanation for all sorts of weird livestock deaths.

Described as a bipedal creature, four to five feet tall with spikes down its back and long, thin arms and legs, the frightening animal was thought to be some kind of alien.

And while sightings became ever more prevalent in America, it was eventually revealed in a series of DNA tests that El Chupacabra was nothing more sinister than a coyote with a severe case of mange.

Loch Ness Monster

There have been hundreds of sightings of this mythical creature over the years, dating right back to the seventh century.

The first photograph was taken in 1933, claiming to show the long necked monster, which is said to be found in Loch Ness in the Highlands of Scotland.

But despite the prevalence of this myth, many scientists believe it is much more likely that the legendary creature is more likely to be a giant sturgeon than a long lost dinosaur.

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Court approves 'Dr. Death' preserved body museum

City authorities had attempted to block Gunther von Hagens' "Body Worlds" museum plans, citing laws banning the display of human corpses.

By Ben Hooper | Dec. 19, 2014 at 1:05 PM

Plastinated camels displayed at the "Body Worlds 3" exhibit at the Saint Louis Science Center Dec. 13, 2007. File Photo by Bill Greenblatt/UPI | License Photo

BERLIN, Dec. 19 (UPI) -- A German court ruled to allow the creator of the traveling "Body Worlds" exhibit to open a permanent exhibition for his preserved human bodies in Berlin.

Gunther von Hagens, the anatomist who created the traveling "Body Worlds" exhibit featuring preserved human bodies and body parts, was granted permission Friday by a Berlin court to open a permanent exhibition.

Berlin city authorities had sought to block the opening of the museum, citing burial laws that ban the public display of human corpses.

The court said the creators of the law did not intend for it to be applied to bodies preserved using plastination, a process that replaces water and fat with plastic.

Von Hagens, nicknamed "Dr. Death" by some critics, said the museum is scheduled to open in January and will feature 20 preserved bodies and up to 200 preserved body parts.

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"Dead" 91-Year-Old Polish Woman Wakes up in Morgue, Asks for Tea

By MONIKA SCISLOWSKA
Monday, Nov 17, 2014 • Updated at 11:09 AM EST

nbcmiami.com

A Polish doctor says she has been in "deep shock" since learning that a 91-year-old woman she pronounced dead woke up in a morgue several hours later.

The doctor — identified in the media as Wieslawa C. — said on TVN24 television Friday that she was sure the patient was dead after finding "no basic life functions" during a morning house call on Nov. 6.

She said she checked for a pulse on a forearm and neck arteries, listened for a heartbeat and the sound of breathing, and checked the pupils for reaction to light, but found none. "If I had had doubts, I would have called the ambulance, done an electrocardiogram, but I was sure that the patient is dead," the doctor said.

The doctor examined the elderly woman, identified by the media as Janina Kolkiewicz, in the eastern town of Ostrow Lubelski after relatives noticed she was not breathing.

Some two hours after she was pronounced dead the woman was taken to the morgue. Shortly before midnight, an undertaker who brought in another body noticed that Kolkiewicz was moving inside a bag she had been placed in. Once it was opened, she complained of being cold and asked for hot tea, the media said. She was then taken home.

A spokeswoman for the local prosecutors, Beata Syk-Jankowska, told The Associated Press that she had never heard of such a case before, and that prosecutors are investigating whether the patient's life and health were endangered by the inaccurate death diagnosis.

They also are urging a regional court to void the death certificate that local authorities issued, which discontinued Kolkiewicz's benefits such as her pension.

"In the legal sense, the woman is dead, but in reality she is clearly alive," Syk-Jankowska said.

She said Kolkiewicz has required no hospitalization since being removed from the morgue and is now in good health.

Copyright Associated Press

A British Tunnel Network Designed to Shelter 60,000 Opens for the First Time in 75 Years

atlasobscura.com

by Ophelia Holt / 18 Dec 2014

The Ramsgate Tunnels in England were reopened this May after 75 years of lying dormant. Originally known as the "Tunnel Railway," a narrow gauge track that connected neighboring Broadstairs to Ramsgate, it went through a variety of guises over the years, from WWII facility to tourist attraction.

The Ramsgate Tunnels (all photographs by the author)

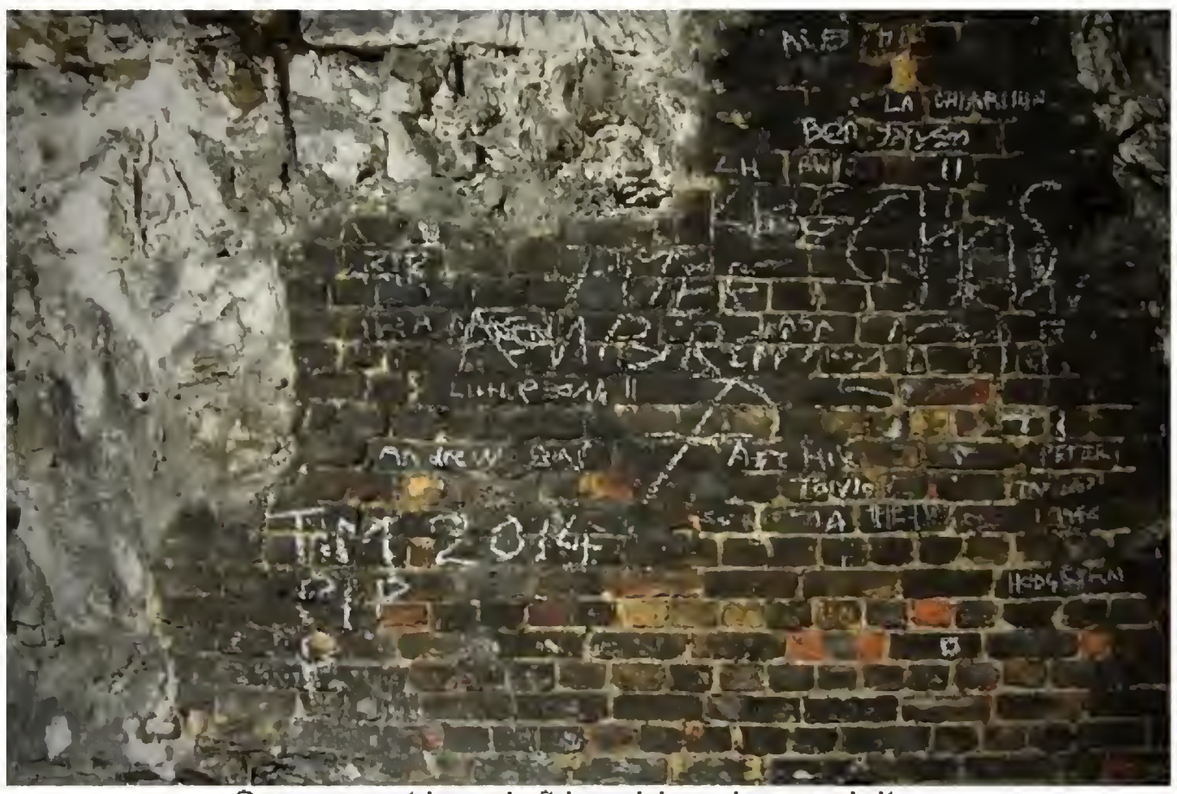
article-image

In 1939, after much campaigning and persuasion, the tunnels were expanded as an air raid shelter, a system that extended beyond the initial narrow gauge tunnel and into a whole series of offshoots. The entrances were spread across the town enabling anyone, at any place in the town, to enter the shelter in under five minutes should the alarm sound. They were also cleverly concealed in order to not stand out in the event of a blackout and could accommodate up 60,000 people — Ramsgate's population was only approximately half that. Though they were built as a preemptive measure, and were thought by some to be an unnecessary luxury and an indulgence by the "Mad Mayor" Aldemore, the Ramsgate tunnels proved invaluable during the war.

Being a costal and port town, facing France, Ramsagate was a clear target for aerial attacks in WWII. On one particularly memorable air raid, 500 bombs were dropped in under ten minutes causing devastation to the town, but incurring a fatality count as low as 11 because of the sheer expanse of the network. The vast majority of the townspeople were so far underground they could not even hear the bombs going off overhead.

The tunnels were initially intended to provide a place to hide safely and sleep overnight in one of the pre-bookable bunks; it became more of permanent settlement than many intended. When you go and visit the tunnels today, you can see some reconstruction settlements at various stages. As you approach the mouth of the tunnel you are met with a WWII era café — "The Ratz" — playing 1940s music and offering hot drinks and tea cakes, necessary if you have braved the walk along the beach on a winter's day. The tour itself is led by a team of enthusiastic locals who are more than willing to share anecdotes they have acquired over the years, many by living in the tunnels. You are lent a hardhat and flashlight and led through the railway tunnel and then down part of the offshoot tunnels.

It is a truly fascinating place to visit, especially if you happen to be in Ramsgate in the pouring



Some markings left by old and new visitors

winter rain like us. It is essential that you book in advance due to high demand for the newly accessible subterranean site.

All photographs by the author.

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Logo-envelope

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A Haunting? A Specter? An Alien Abduction? Whatever It Was, This Was the Scariest Moment of His Life

Quora Become a fan The best answer to any question

huffingtonpost.com

Posted: 10/30/2014 4:45 pm EDT Updated: 10/30/2014 4:59 pm EDT

What was the scariest moment you have ever experienced in your life?: originally appeared on Quora: The best answer to any question. Ask a question, get a great answer. Learn from experts and access insider knowledge. You can follow Quora on Twitter, Facebook, and Google+.

Answer by Ken Miyamoto, Produced screenwriter, former Sony Pictures script reader/story analyst

This is a true story...

I've told this to a select few.

I was a freshmen in high school in my home town of La Crosse, Wisconsin.

I was sleeping over at my friend Tom's house. We were watching a movie in his living room when he suddenly got a phone call. I watched as he listened to what was being said on the other line. I watched as emotion poured over his face as he threw the phone across the room.

After moments of crying, he told me that a boy at my school had committed suicide. Now, I knew this boy only through seeing him in the halls. My friend Tom and I didn't go to the same high school but Tom had gone to middle school with this boy. Apparently, Tom bullied him during those years. He wasn't proud of it, and to be honest, I was pretty surprised because he was/is a great guy.

He had utter remorse.

We decided to sneak out and go for a walk. The year was roughly 1990. Maybe 1991. We were freshmen in high school.

Now, sneaking out was nothing new. We always did it. At the time, we weren't into drugs, alcohol, or partying. We just liked the freedom of walking the streets at night. The discussions were always great.

Normally, we'd go walk through the big cemetery that was near my house. It was behind the train tracks that still run through La Crosse to this day. We loved the danger of the cemetery. The scares. We were kids. It was a rite of passage.

As we walked along the train tracks, leading to the cemetery, we stopped. To this day, I can't explain why. We had walked into that cemetery a dozens of times... and on scarier nights.

For whatever reason, we didn't want to go in there. I don't know if the thought of death on our minds due to my classmate's suicide was a factor. Perhaps. Regardless, without really saying

anything to each other, we stopped, turned around, and decided to head down a nearby street.

Now, in retrospect, I do have to say that throughout this walk, things seemed off. There wasn't a car in sight. This was suburbia. Even walking through the town's main street was odd because there just weren't any cars. Odd. It was roughly after midnight. It was a weekend night. Where was everybody. Perhaps just a strange coincidence.

Lastly, there was something in the air. Both Tom and I felt it. We even brought it up.

"It feels weird tonight. The air. The lights."

So we decided to walk down a dead end street. At the end of the street was a ditch with a simple up, down, and up trail that led to the street that I lived in. Simple enough.

Keep in mind, as I get into the horrifying part of this story, that we were in the suburbs. These weren't old, creepy houses with strange individuals. And the trees were small. It wasn't a brand new development, but it wasn't that old either.

So as Tom and I are walking down this street, we're looking down to the road beneath our feet as we talk. I don't remember the exact conversation at this particular moment. Perhaps we were talking about the tragedy of that night. But it could just have easily been about Star Wars or Akira.

As we approached the dead end, which was a few houses away...

Tom and I suddenly stopped.

We did so at the same time without saying one word to each other.

Our heads slowly turned towards each other, both sensing something. The hair on our arms and backs of our necks standing high. Then our gaze slowly moved forward in unison, slightly to the right.

That's when we saw it.

About two houses away, in a virtually barren front yard of a suburban home, besides some bushes, was a DARK FIGURE.

It was someone or something in dark robes.

No face. No features at all. Just the robe.

Now, this figure didn't acknowledge us. Not yet.

It instead walked or moved in a certain way. I can't articulate it correctly. As if it was walking in circles slowly... without really walking.

It held something that was blowing in the wind. And yes, the wind picked up a little bit as well.

Another odd element was the light that illuminated it somewhat. There was a street light a few houses up, but it wasn't strong enough to illuminate this figure as it was.

Tom and I were frozen. In fact, I'm almost frozen as I write this. It's been awhile since I have thought about this night.

So there we stood, frozen in fear, staring at this dark figure moving, yet doing so without moving.

And it was holding something. Or perhaps what was blowing in the wind was more of its robe. I'm not sure.

We stared at this... thing... for I don't know how long... until...

IT STOPPED AND SUDDENLY LOOKED UP AT US, as if finally alarmed by our presence!

That was enough for us. We ran away as fast as we could. We cut through a side street that was to lead us to a parallel street towards my neighborhood. This street lead to a slight hill. As we rounded the corner and started running up the hill in a panic...

We stopped. Because on top of that hill, we saw another dark figure with its arms raised.

We turned around and ran away in the direction of Tom's house, which at this distance was at least five miles away.

We ran. Time stood still.

The next thing I remember, we're lying in the middle of a courtyard of some other neighborhood that we'd never been in, gasping for breath.

We sat up and without saying a word, we walked in silence back to his house. The air felt normal again. Although we felt like we were in a haze of sorts. Albeit out of danger.

We fell asleep in his house. I woke up that morning and went home.

A few days later, I rode my bike to the location.

Perhaps it was shadow play? Perhaps there was a certain tree or bush or maybe a For Sale sign or something that made it look like there was something else there.

Nothing. It was an open yard.

Tom and I didn't speak of that night for a long time. Years later when I brought it up, he replied, "Yeah. What the hell was that?" As if no time had passed.

What was it? I have no idea.

We hadn't taken any drugs. We hadn't been drinking any alcohol.

I often wonder if it could have been a haunting, a spectre, a ghost, etc. Maybe it was an alien abduction or sighting. We saw no craft but there was that unexplained light. Or maybe it was some other kids messing with us. But how would they have known we were coming? How could they be so prepared?

I just don't know.

That was roughly 23 years ago, give or take.

And I do believe that this was the scariest moment in my life.

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A Kind-Hearted Werewolf

wulver

Most of the werewolves in folklore, film and books are usually these monstrous and ferocious beasts that turn anyone unlucky enough to cross them into nothing but a pile of bloody pulp. But among the chaos and gore is one old folk tale of a sweet and kind **werewolf**.

The unique werewolves I am speaking of are the **Galley Trots**, also known as **Wulvers**, which come from the Shetland Islands of Scotland. The wulver is described as a normal man covered with short brown hair, but what is not so normal is that this man has the head of a **wolf**.

As long as the wulvers are left in peace they show no aggression to anyone. The best known stories about a **wulver** claim that it would spend its time sitting on a rock and fishing. That rock is still known today as "**The Wulver's Stane.**" When the wulver was finished fishing it was known to leave some of its fish on the window sills of poor families.

But like most supernatural creatures, there are a few bad stories about **wulvers** as well. In some versions of the myth they were mainly associated with old burial grounds and ancient buildings. Their presence was once thought to indicate that valuable items or money was hidden nearby. There was also the belief that to see a wulver or galley trot was an omen of approaching death. In some parts they said they would only appear to sit mournfully outside the home of a terminally ill person.

Even those "bad" things pointed out above aren't actually all that bad compared to other **werewolf** stories out there. Sometimes those stories of scary fanged beasts ripping bodies apart with their claws and then getting shot by a silver bullet get old. So it's refreshing to have at least one old folktale about a helpful and compassionate werewolf.

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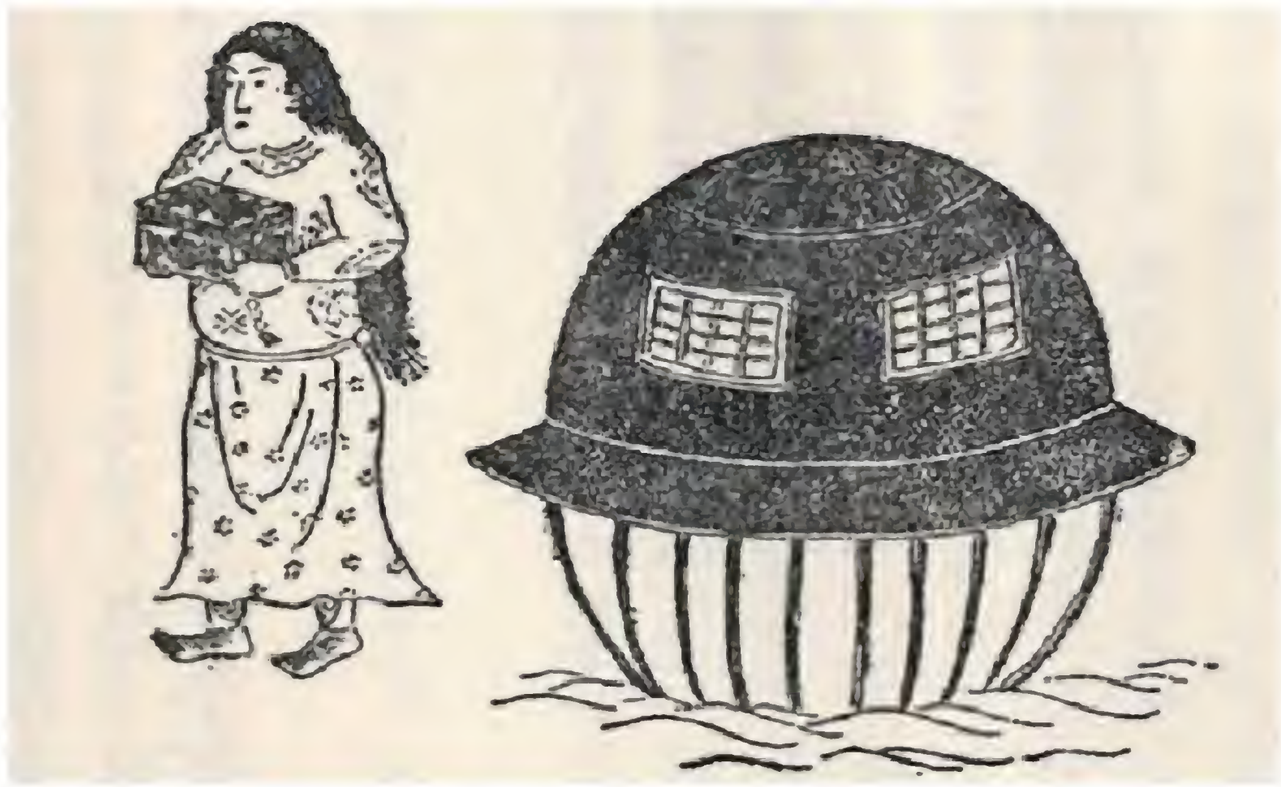
A Nineteenth Century Japanese Folk Tale Still Inspires UFO-Believers

io9.com

Written by Esther Inglis-Arkell



In the early 1800s, two folk tales circulated around Japan. Both involved a very strange woman emerging from a very strange ship. Her dress and appearance seemed out of this world. What happened?

There are two versions of this story. One was written in 1825 and one in 1844. In both versions, some Japanese sailors happened to notice, floating in the ocean, a very strange vessel. It was circular, which was not so unusual. What caught there attention was that it seemed to have a lid that covered the top of the ship, and glass windows. When they got it to shore, out came a very beautiful woman holding a very mysterious box. She wouldn't let anyone touch it. They couldn't ask her about it, because she didn't speak their language. All the materials making her ship, her clothes, and her box, were completely unknown to them. Eventually, the woman went back to her boat, and drifted out to sea again.

Expand

Well, that's the boring 1844 version. The 1825 version plays out more like an old BBC murder mystery. You can tell, because the woman is more of a vamp. She has bright red hair and eyebrows, and red hair with white extensions. Plus, the box was bigger. The size of the box provided a crafty local with an important clue, and, after consideration, he announced his conclusions. The woman was a foreign princess who had had an illicit love affair. The lover had been beheaded, and the princess was put to sea in a craft, with his head in a box. The villagers, aghast at the hussy in their midst, pushed her and her vessel into the sea again.

As short as it is, the myth about the strange-looking vessel made with foreign materials has become an enduring favorite of ufologists. They believe that, possibly, a flying saucer crashed in the sea, and washed up on land. Possibly aliens were trying to blend in by matching our technology, sending flying saucers when we could fly and sailing saucers when

2Reply

DarthClem3

ProfileFollow

DarthClem3Esther Inglis-Arkell
11/30/14 10:47am

The red hair, if it's not an embellishment or a misidentification of some kind of head covering, would seem to indicate the woman could have been Russian, Scandinavian, Scottish, Irish, etc. Did any of them make boats or lifeboats at the time (or a short enough time before for one to still be in use) that could fit the description?

Reply

Asciel

ProfileFollow

AscielDarthClem3
11/30/14 1:02pm

actually, red hair is just the general characteristic of Japanese water spirits.

8Reply

startrashed

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startrashedEsther Inglis-Arkell
11/30/14 10:07am

Obviously an Atlantean in a suspended animation chamber who realized she had emerged too soon.

6Reply

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all we could do was sail. When people argue, the ufo believes point to the unnatural substances of the woman's clothes and ship. They argue that, although people weren't as savvy in those days as we are today, they people in the legend were hardly yokels. They would have recognized most kinds of materials and most kinds of vessels. This utterly foreign being might have been crash-landed, or might have been on a scouting ship.

[Via The History of Utsuro Bune, Tales of Castaways.]

relic1980 **relic1980**

ProfileFollow

relic1980Esther Inglis-Arkell
11/30/14 10:18am

Expand

We'd probably have heard more about it if the alien princess had brought along her friends...

26Reply

shizumadrive **Octopussoup**

ProfileFollow

Octopussouprelic1980
11/30/14 10:25am

hmm never saw Christmas Lum before

1Reply

relic1980 **relic1980**

ProfileFollow

relic1980Octopussoup
11/30/14 10:37am

I remembered seeing it from an old issue (early 90s) issue of Animerica I still have. UY is still one of my favorite anime, to this day.

1Reply

vavooo **vavooo**

ProfileFollow

vavooorelic1980
11/30/14 10:43am

you got Moroboshi as your avatar?! I'm so jealous!

1Reply

shizumadrive **Octopussoup**

ProfileFollow

Octopussouprelic1980
11/30/14 11:17am

Mine too. It's prob my favorite of Rumiko Takahashi's works. The anime is great the manga is hilarious.

3Reply

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FrankenPC **FrankenPC**

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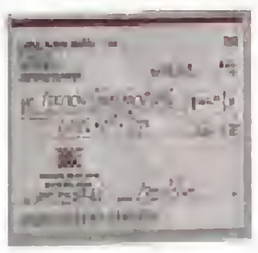

FrankenPCEsther Inglis-Arkell
11/30/14 10:22am

IMO Not UFO. Time traveler. The box is probably a laptop or tablet of some kind. The UFO shaped pod is just a lifeboat. The time traveling machine can't place an object precisely in the past due to planetary motion over time. So, they get dropped roughly over a large body of water in the air. Sure, the landing's rough. But it's the best bet.

35Reply

elmorepow **elmorepow**

ProfileFollow

elmorepowFrankenPC
11/30/14 1:17pm

Exactly what I thought of. Description of a vessel also sounds like a traditional orbit landing pod. Too bad she traveled too far back in time, she would have had much better chance of surviving in late 1900's :)

3Reply

bakana **bakana**

ProfileFollow

bakanaFrankenPC
11/30/14 2:40pm

One thing I never understood about that "can't teleport into an already occupied space" (Nightcrawler has similar issues) stuff is that...that space IS occupied. By air. It seems like some kind of horrible thing would happen if you tried to suddenly occupy the

same space as a bunch of air molecules. At the very least, you'd get an insane case of the bends...

10Reply

sepr **SEPr**

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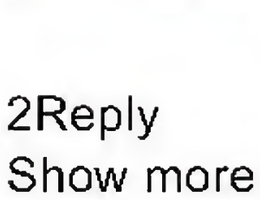

SEPrbakana
11/30/14 2:59pm

But: If you appear where air is, it's less dense than you; it moves out of the way fast (hopefully not so fast it reacts in some way, e.g., the oxygen ignites). If you appear where rock is, it's more dense; you go squish.

5Reply

FrankenPC **FrankenPC**

ProfileFollow

FrankenPCbakana
11/30/14 4:07pm

heh! Good point. Wherever you left from the future, you'd have to exchange places with the matter from your destination.

2Reply
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jinxe **jinxe**

ProfileFollow

jinxeEsther Inglis-Arkell
11/30/14 10:35am

It was an early technology submarine sent from some other country to spy on the Japanese. Having been spotted, they quickly threw together whatever it was that they could find and made one of the younger boys on the submarine (you know the one, he had skin that was as beautiful as a young maiden's) dress up in this weird outfit. He then weaved for them this tale about being sent off because of love, in his best falsetto, and being a foreign princess.

Or it was a manatee and those sailors had been smoking some very nice crack.

12Reply

Asciel **Asciel**

ProfileFollow

Ascieljinxe
11/30/14 1:01pm

there were early submarines (much earlier than the 1800's) but they were not made of strange and unusual material. Actually, considering the account is from the 1800s, it's even more weird that they say the material was unusual (however it's told from a village perspective and Japan was super-secluded so what did the villagers know...)

Reply

jinxe **jinxe**

ProfileFollow

jinxeAsciel
11/30/14 3:47pm

Well, I wasn't being super serious. Though why the aliens would make it something that was something in the water, yet not make it look like an actual ship... I dunno.

1Reply

collex **collex**

ProfileFollow

collexEsther Inglis-Arkell
11/30/14 10:30am

So an alien came here just to show us a box and then leave?

Confirms my theory that the only aliens that visit us are drunken fratboys and fratgirls having some fun at our expense.

28Reply

bluehinter **bluehinter**

ProfileFollow

bluehintercollex
11/30/14 11:57am

Or "teasers" as they're known colloquially.

Expand

18Reply

mxchxtx **mXchXtX**

ProfileFollow

mXchXtXcollex
11/30/14 1:33pm

these guys?

Expand

10Reply

collex **collex**

ProfileFollow

collexmXchXtX
11/30/14 2:27pm

I do not know what this is from but yes, they fit the profile.

Reply

mxchxtx **mXchXtX**

ProfileFollow

mXchXtXcollex
11/30/14 4:26pm

Aqua Teen Hunger Force currently known as **Aqua TV Show Show** but prior to that as **Aqua Something You Know Whatever** formerly **Aqua Unit Patrol Squad 1** (née **Aqua Teen Hunger Force**).

I wish I was kidding.

edit: and they're not even the most "eff with the hu-mans" aliens on that show.

3Reply
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shirtbloke **ShirtBloke**

ProfileFollow

ShirtBlokeEsther Inglis-Arkell
11/30/14 10:47am

It's the Tardis!

20Reply

bluehinter

bluehinter ProfileFollow

bluehinterShirtBloke
11/30/14 12:14pm

Amy's going to be pissed when she find out they drew her looking 40 lbs heavier. (Has nobody in the early 19th century seen a life preserver before?)

And it's clearly not the TARDIS, otherwise the translation circuits would have been working. My guess is... one of the Doctor's plan's went south and Amy and Dorium Maldovar ended up having to steal a Sontaran scout ship, which crash-landing into both 1844's **and** 1825's Japan, at which point Amy paddled the craft to shore, but the local villagers got suspicious when she wouldn't let anybody touch the ship or open the mysterious wooden box that kept complaining about being upside down and the lack of a decent wifi signal.

Expand

10Reply

frickle **Frickle**

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Frickle**bluehinter**
11/30/14 12:53pm

I was thinking one of the future incarnations happened to look exactly like Donna Noble. And for some reason you never see her and Catherine Tate in the room at the same time.

2Reply

ManchuCandidate **ManchuCandidate**

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ManchuCandidateEsther Inglis-Arkell
11/30/14 10:07am

Imagine this translated into Japanese.

7Reply

Smeagol

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SmeagolManchuCandidate
11/30/14 6:12pm

Is that 'everything always happen to me' joke a reference to Creepshow? Wasn't that Stephen King's line in the film?

Reply

Asciel

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AscielEsther Inglis-Arkell
11/30/14 12:58pm

those are late aliens, supposedly they arrived in Japan much earlier. The Jomon-era figurines are supposed to be aliens, so believe a lot of people .

There are even more strange things when we go to textual accounts, because the most ordinary things can be described in a weird matter if you don't know something. There are the most amazing accounts of wonderful water-spraying monsters or ships in the southern sea... until you realize they are whales.

I especially remember one Chinese account from the Sui-era I think (or maybe it was already early Tang) telling of a fake-Daoist-immortal who supposedly wanted to travel to the Isle of the Immortals and had to explain why he didn't succeed (this is a historical account, nontheless). He told that he went out to the island (hand-swimming in the ocean, of course) when there was a huge noise and first all the water was drained to a point, then there appeared a large black monster with eyes beaming of light for a thousand li (miles) and a skin like iron, and strong wind blew a storm, waves started crashing and gurgling and then a bright red beam of light was shot into the night sky, before it vanished in the waves, when the teller was supposedly struck unconscious.

I don't know about you but when I read that I immediately thought of a submarine or something like that, giving an emergency signal. Whatever it really was.

1Reply

seriouslymike **Seriously Mike**

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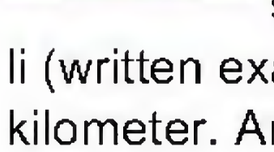

Seriously MikeAsciel
11/30/14 1:15pm

One li is actually a third of a mile or thereabouts, from what I've checked. Researching stuff for RPG adventures sometimes points you to the weirdest things.

1Reply

Asciel **Asciel**

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AscielSeriously Mike
12/01/14 12:20pm

this is true and it is isn't. Actually you have to check for every dynasty (and sometimes several times then) which length is of what length. So yes, there is the li (written exactly the same) that is roughly a third of a mile, there is also one a bit more than a kilometer. And those are the easiest lengths, the difference between a zhang and a chi is even more confusing because they sometimes switch meaning in between dynasties.

Reply

Amaranth-Sparrow **Suzaku**

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SuzakuEsther Inglis-Arkell
11/30/14 10:09am

The Japanese were really into their proto-science fiction. There's also the Tale of the Bamboo Cutter.

3Reply

Bismod **Bismod**

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BismodSuzaku
11/30/14 11:08am

This is technically an ending spoiler for Bamboo Cutter, and Princess Kaguya and all the

By the time Suleiman the Magnificent (1494-1566 A.D.) took the reins of the Ottoman Empire, the tribal confederation of Orghuz Turks that had begun spilling out of Anatolia in 1299 A.D. had emerged as one of the most powerful political entities in the world. By the 1453 fall of Constantinople, Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II had effectively ended the existence of the Byzantine Empire, placing the Ottomans in an ideal strategic position to invade Europe through the Balkans. Things were looking a little dicey for the future of Christendom at this point. In 1458, the first Borgia Pope, Calixtus III (uncle of the infamous Rodrigo Lanzol Borgia, otherwise known as Pope Alexander VI) died, after unsuccessful attempts to urge a crusade against the Ottoman Turks. He was succeeded by Enea Silvio Bartolomeo Piccolomini, who took the name Pope Pius II (somewhat ironically, since he is also the only Pope known for writing erotica – several poems and the best-selling novel *The Tale of Two Lovers*), and immediately recognized he had a serious problem in the East. Pius II convened the somewhat ineffectual Council of Mantua in 1459, calling for a new crusade against the Ottomans, who by this point were making forays into southeastern Europe. The Christian princes of Europe were a little too busy stealing stuff from each other to take him seriously, except for one particularly enthusiastic supporter named Vlad III, Prince of Wallachia (1431–1476), also referred to by the Romanian moniker Vlad Tepes ("the Impaler"), or his patrynomic name "Dracula".

Sourpuss historians will quickly point out that Vlad Tepes was not actually undead, or really a vampire at all, our classic image deriving largely from the poetic license Bram Stoker took with the history of Transylvania (Vlad was born in Transylvania, but ruled the nearby Romanian region of Wallachia). In fact, Vlad was reputedly so extreme in his bloodthirsty nastiness, that most vampires would consider him a bit over the top, and could learn a thing or two about homicidal insanity from him. At the time of Pope Pius II's crusade against the Turks, most people agreed that Vlad was a stand-up guy and defender of the faith, and to this day he is a bit of a folk hero in Romania for his steadfast resistance to Ottoman incursions. Diplomats, Ambassadors, papal nuncio's, and finally, even Pope Pius II himself sang his praises, admiring his military exploits, particularly after a series of brutal defeats he handed to the Ottomans along the Danube. Now, Sultan Mehmed II was no slouch when it came to wartime atrocities, practicing rape, destruction, pedophilia, and the enslavement of vast numbers of folks with wondrous abandon, but when he encountered Vlad's fascination with impalement (the numbers vary, but surely in the thousands, some say 20,000), he didn't think he could compete.

This picturesque barbarity appealed to the imagination of the Turkish ruler, who, as an artist in cruelty, conceded that Vlad belonged to a class above him. When the Turkish sovereign made a punitive expedition to Bucharest, he found the approach to the town, half a mile long, lined with stakes, on which were rotting the bodies of 2000 dead Turks. "How," Mohammed said, "can we despoil of his estates a man who is not afraid to defend it by such means as these?" Vlad hung on the invading army, always inflicting losses, without showing himself long enough to be attacked in a formal battle (Bevan, 1913, p268).

And Pope Pius II loved this guy, who was actually making his crusade happen despite the lukewarm response of the rest of Europe and giving the Ottoman Turks pause. Vlad actually had a few good reasons to hate the Turks. Vlald's father, a certain Vlad II Dracul, the former ruler of Wallachia, had been usurped in 1442 by the political machinations of rivals supported by the big kid on the block, the Kingdom of Hungary. He managed to get Ottoman support and reclaim his throne, but was forced to send his two sons Radu and Vlad to the Ottoman court as hostages. Radu flourished, eventually converting to Islam, whereas Vlad developed a deep seated hate for his ostensible hosts. By the time Vlad Tepes ascended to the Voivodeship of Wallalchia (something along the lines of being a Baron), he had a number of problems, apart from his psychotic rage, passion for gruesome torture, and other psychological issues. He seemed to be the only European aristocrat (apart from his neighbor Stephen the Great of Moldavia) heeding Pope Pius II's crusader call, he was vastly outnumbered by the massive Ottoman army, the King of Hungary was busy embezzling the funds Rome promised to fund the crusade, his brother Radu was working for the Sultan, and Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II was sallying across the Carpathians, not to mention he was saddled with an unruly bunch of nobles that continuously plotted to overthrow him. This would make anyone cranky.

But in 1456 and 1457 two strong princes ascended the thrones of the principalities; these were Vlad "the Impaler" or "the Devil," in Wallachia, and Stephen the Great in Moldavia. The hideous surname, which history has bestowed upon this Wallachian prince, was fully deserved. No man, even in that age, was so cruel. Contemporary writers describe him as a tiger who thirsted for human blood. In six years he put twenty thousand persons to death by the most horrible tortures — a record which it would be hard to surpass even in the sanguinary annals of the Orient. But Vlad not only craved the blood of his victims; he took a fiendish delight in mocking their agonies when under torture. His cruelty had, at least, the effect of suppressing brigandage and intimidating the disloyal nobles. When the Sultan sent an army against him, not a single man of them dared to desert him, although his brother was on the side of the Turks. Foreign merchants had no fear of travelling with large sums of money through a land where thieves met with such a terrible fate. Vlad chafed under the ignominy to which the puny successors of Mirtschea had submitted, and refused to send the annual tribute of five hundred youths, which Wallachia was expected to furnish for the corps of Janissaries. Mohammed II headed an army against this audacious ruler, but Vlad, disguised as a Turk, spied out the Turkish camp and utterly routed the invaders, impaling those whom he took prisoners. But he did not long keep his crown. Stephen the Great of Moldavia, whom he had placed on the throne of that country, attacked him in 1462 while he was pursuing the Turks, and forced him to seek refuge in Hungary. Wallachia came under the influence of the sister-principality after his flight, and, though he was afterwards restored, he fell by the hand of an assassin. Moldavia rued ere long the fatal blunder of her prince in dethroning the man, who, in spite of his cruelties, had been a bulwark of the two principalities against the Turks, soon to become masters of both (Miller, 1896, p41-43).

Vlad Tepes was able to hold out for a little while, making the Ottomans reconsider the wisdom of tangling with a Balkan prince who didn't think twice about setting twenty thousand

Turkish soldiers on pointy sticks to die slow and agonizing deaths, just to make a point. Since everybody else in Europe except for the Pope was waffling on just how dangerous the Ottoman's were, Vlad was in a tricky position. As the Ottomans delivered repeated defeats throughout the region, various Mediterranean powers began to realize that they better cowboy up or start learning Turkish. This of course, emboldened Vlad enough that he started making daring and brilliantly executed commando raids across the Danube River in an effort to (1) irritate the Ottomans, and (2) keep his supply of victims to impale flowing.

Pope Pius II received the news of the surrender of Smederevo as an unmitigated disaster for the west, and consequently during the deliberations at the Congress of Mantua in 1459 the launching of a crusade was officially announced. As a result of the establishment of despot Thomas's control over the Morea with western support, Pius regarded the Morea as an excellent base for operations against the Ottomans. The sultan, however, invaded the Morea in 1460 and annexed the entire region, with the exception of a few fortresses on the coasts which belonged to Venice. The capture of Argos by the Ottomans finally convinced the Venetians of the necessity of declaring war (July 28, 1463). Meanwhile, new developments in Wallachia and Bosnia had made inevitable the outbreak of an open conflict between the Hungarians and the Ottomans. In 1461 Mehmed had sought to regain the allegiance of the voivode of Wallachia, but Vlad III Tepesh ("the Impaler") had responded by allying himself with the king of Hungary instead, and even went so far as to take advantage of the sultan's absence during the Trebizond campaign to attack Ottoman outposts across the Danube (Setton, 1955, p325).

Much of Vlad Tepes reputation could be written off to psychological warfare and wartime propaganda if it wasn't for the fact that he was relatively unpleasant to his own people, diplomatic missions, housepets, plants, and more or less anybody that looked at him sideways as well.

They are said to have given him the name of ' the Devil', but the same designation, as well as that of the Impaler, has also been bestowed upon Vlad, a voivode of Wallachia, who was probably the ally of Hunniades, and who, if one-tenth of what has been related of him be true, has a much better claim to the title. He is represented to have been one of the most atrocious and cruel tyrants who ever disgraced even those dark ages. One day he massacred 500 boyars who were dissatisfied with his rule. The torture of men, women, and children, seems to have been his delight. Certain Turkish envoys, when admitted into his presence, refused to remove their whereupon he had them nailed to their heads. He burned 400 missionaries and impaled 500 gypsies to secure their property. In order to strike terror into Mohammed II, he crossed over into Bulgaria, defeated the Turks, and brought back with him 25,000 prisoners, men, women, and children, whom he is said to have impaled upon a large plain called Praelatu. Notwithstanding his successes, however, Vlad was at length compelled to submit to the Turkish rule, and he concluded the ' Second Capitulation ' at Adrianople (1460), in which the tribute to the Porte was increased, but no other important change was made in the terms of suzerainty (Samuelson, 1882, p161).

In the end, Vlad Tepes was fighting a losing battle, mostly because he was the only one even trying to fight. The insane bloodlust probably helped to stave off the inevitable for a little while, until the Ottomans figured out that they just needed to use their vastly superior military might and roll up the entire Balkans, which they did by the 1480's and Wallachians realized that their life expectancy was remarkably short as long as Vlad Tepes was around contemplating new ways to torture, dismember, boil, or roast them for giggles. The Wallalchian nobles ended up conspiring with the Ottomans to kick out Vlad, who fled to Hungary, where he was imprisoned (Matthew Corvinus, King of Hungary had been spending the Pope's crusade money on liquor and prostitutes with no intention of helping Vlad in his crusade), which was easier than admitting the financial improprieties he was guilty of. Eventually, the Ottomans got their hands on him (after a brief re-instatement to the throne of Wallalchia in 1475, which his pro-Ottoman brother Radu had been installed in), beheaded him, and sent his noggin to Constantinople as a trophy. Meanwhile King Corvinus, still covering up the fact that he hadn't sent any troops against the Turks, and had spent all the Pope's money, started encouraging propaganda (sort of, since the truth is Vlad did actually love impalement and killed tens of thousands of people in rather disturbing ways) describing the vicious and un-christian behaviors of Vlad Tepes. Popular pamphlets and manuscripts circulated throughout the Holy Roman Empire detailing the gruesome exploits of Vlad. Pope Pius II eventually caught wind of the change in attitude towards his Wallachian hitman, with whom he had previously had a chummy relationship, and by the time he got around to writing his *Commentaries* (the only autobiography ever written by a Pope, although written in third person), he had completely disavowed the Wallachian Prince, despite the fact that it was Pius' call for an all out holy war against the Ottomans that both motivated Vlad in the first place (although maybe he was just hanging around waiting for a good excuse to shed gallons of blood), and originally inspired the admiration of the Pope for Vlad's exuberant defense of Christendom. Not sure why he winds up referring to both Vlad and his father as "John Dragula" – maybe that's what his close friends called him.

We must now go on to describe the atrocious infamy and monstrous nature of John Dragula, whose crimes are so notorious among the Wallachians whom he governed that no tragedy could surpass them. The Wallachians live beyond the Danube between the Euxine and the districts today called Transylvania where there are seven German-speaking cities. The Wallachians speak Italian, but an imperfect, corrupted Italian. Some think that once Roman legions were sent there against the Dacians who used to inhabit these lands and that these legions were commanded by a certain Flaccus from whose name they were called first Flacci and then with a change of letters Valachi. Their descendants, as has been said above, became more barbarous than the barbarians. In our day they were governed by Dragula, a man of fickle and inconstant character. In the year of the Incarnate Word 1456, because he had deserted to the Turks, John Hunyadi, regent of the kingdom of Hungary, after conquering him in war, took him captive and put him to death together with his second son. A certain Ladislas was put in his place to rule over the Wallachians. Dragula's other son named John escaped the regent's clutches and soon after, having gathered an army, slew Ladislas, regained much of his paternal inheritance and put to a cruel death all who had been opposed to himself and his father. He invaded the province of Cibinium and burned many farmhouses with all their occupants. A great number of men were taken in

chains to Wallachia and there impaled on stakes. Traders who were crossing through Wallachia with precious merchandise, induced to do so by promises of safe-conduct from the state, he plundered of their goods and killed. He had four hundred boys brought from Vurcia on the pretext of having them taught the Wallachian language and shut them up in a furnace where they were burned to death. The nobler men of his race and those who were most nearly akin to him he killed together with their wives and children. Some of his household he had buried naked up to the navel and then riddled with arrows; some he had skinned. For a certain Daym, son of another Daym, the Voivode whom he took in war, he built a tomb while he was still alive and ordered the priests to chant the burial service; when they had finished he beheaded the prisoner. Fifty-three ambassadors who had been sent to him by the Siculi and Transsylvanians he imprisoned. Then he invaded their lands which had no fear of any hostile move, and ravaged them with fire and sword. Ceilinus," the captain of his own troops, he impaled because he refused to satisfy his monstrous cruelty. He burned at the stake six hundred men of Vurcia who fell into his hands as they were crossing to an adjoining province. A certain Zeganurus who had refused to hang with his own hands a thief who had been caught, he boiled in a great kettle and served him up as a banquet to his fellow-citizens. He tore sucking babes from their mothers' breasts and before their eyes dashed them upon the rocks. Entering the province of Transylvania he summoned as his friends all the Wallachians who lived there and when they were all gathered he let loose his soldiers and killed them and burned all their farms. By these methods he is said to have murdered more than 30,000 persons (Pius II, Commentaries, Book XI).

Just a few years earlier, Pope Pius II couldn't get enough of Vlad Tepes. You just can't trust anybody to have your back. Even popes. The Catholic Church has always had a sort of logistical problem. They're supposed to defend the faith, but it would be unseemly to have a great big standing army of commando monks. So, historically, they've had to rely on some questionable folks to uphold their theological perspective on geopolitics, up to and including, bloodsucking fiends from hell. Somebody's got to do the dirty work, or the ruling powers don't take you seriously and dismiss your temporal authority, evidenced in Joseph Stalin's catty remark, "The Pope? How many divisions has he got?"

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A surprisingly recent Buckingham Palace tradition

15December2014

bbc.com

Christmas display at Buckingam Palace

Each December a Christmas tree appears beneath the famous royal balcony in the forecourt of Buckingham Palace. But unlike the famous Trafalgar Square tree it's a fairly modern tradition, writes Joe Kent, of Radio 4's Saturday Live programme.

It may all have begun with a letter to the Queen from an unhappy commuter in 1996. Graphic designer Robin Ollington, now 85, was walking to Victoria station on his way home. "I passed through Trafalgar Square where the spirit of Christmas was very much in evidence where people sang carols around the beautifully lit tree."

The festive mood continued down the Mall until he reached Buckingham Palace. "A gloomy mass. What a contrast. Gas lamps, silent sentries, and the odd window dimly lit. Not a sign of Christmas." So he wrote to the Queen and her private secretary suggesting that perhaps a well-lit tree in the forecourt would add a little Christmas cheer.

Three days later a reply arrived thanking him for his letter. "I have shown your letter to the Queen, and your suggestion has been most carefully noted," it informed him.

Expecting to hear nothing more, and slightly sceptical of the letter's claims, Robin thought nothing more. "I write lots of letters and rarely get the courtesy of a reply. I was just so pleased to have got such a friendly response."

Buckingham Palace, taken by Cesar Gonzalez Palomo

But then another letter from the Palace arrived. "I just thought I would let you know that, were you to drive past Buckingham Palace after dark, or indeed in the daytime, you would see the front decorated with a welcoming Christmas Tree - all due to your very sensible suggestion," the letter read, according to Robin.

"It's incredible to think about it now. It was a complete surprise. People think I'm making it up but I've still got the letters to prove it."

It's not Robin's only brush with royalty. His graphic design work included stamp designs for both Guernsey and Gibraltar - which require royal approval before they can go into production. In 1998 he worked on a series of stamps celebrating the history of the Christmas tree and its introduction to Britain by Prince Albert.

Robin is yet to see this year's Christmas tree but hopes to do so soon.

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Akshayavat

Akshayavat or **Akshay Vat** ("the indestructible banyan tree") is a sacred fig tree mentioned in the Hindu mythology.

According to a legend, once the sage Markandeya asked Lord Narayana to show him a specimen of the divine power. Narayana flooded the entire world for a moment, during which only the Akshayavat could be seen above the water level.[1]

A sacred fig tree located within the Patalpuri Temple at the Allahabad Fort is worshipped as the Akshayavat by Hindus. As of 2011, a permission from the Commandant of Allahabad Fort's Ordnance Depot is needed to visit this tree. On one day during the Kumbh Mela, the site is open to all the pilgrims.

According to the local belief, the sage Shukdeva narrated Srimad Bhagavatam to the king Parikshit under this tree.

In *The Encyclopaedia Asiatica* (1976), Edward Balfour identifies a banyan tree mentioned in Ramayana with this tree at Prayag, Allahabad.[2] Rama, Lakshmana and Sita are said to have rested beneath this tree.[1]

The Chinese Buddhist pilgrim Xuanzang mentions a tree (a stump with few branches[2]) which was said to be the home of a man-eating demon. As part of a custom, some pilgrims would offer themselves at the nearby temple. Tsang mentions that the tree was surrounded with the human bones. General Cunnigham identifies this tree with the Akshayavat.[1]

Rishabha (Jain tirthankar) is also said to have practised tapasya beneath the historical Akshayavata at Prayag.

A tree at Gaya, Bihar[2][3] and another tree at Varanasi are also worshipped as the Akshayavat. The Bodhi tree is said to be a manifestation of the Akashayavat at Prayag.[4]

According to Tibetan Buddhist tradition, Buddha is said to have planted a seed of the Prayag's Akshayavat next to Mount Kailash on a mountain known as the Palace of the Medicine Buddha.[4]

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1. ^ Jump up to: ***a b c*** W. Crooke (2004). *The Popular Religion and Folklore of Northern India* (reprint ed.). Kessinger. p. 98. ISBN 978-1-4179-4902-1.
2. ^ Jump up to: ***a b c*** Frederick J. Simoons (1998). *Plants of life, plants of death* (illustrated ed.). University of Wisconsin Press. pp. 80–81. ISBN 978-0-299-15904-7.
3. **Jump up ^** *The Sacred Complex in Hindu Gaya*, Concept. Page 9.
4. ^ Jump up to: ***a b*** "Akshaya Vata: The Eternal Banyan Tree". The Himalayan Institute. 2001-12-01. Retrieved 2011-03-15.

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In 1944 Battle of the Bulge, Albert Darago, then 19, took on a German tank by himself

By Michael E. Ruane
December 15 at 9:35 PM

washingtonpost.com

Al Darago, 89, a Battle of the Bulge veteran, is pictured at his home on Monday in Parkeville, Md. Darago was a 19-year-old draftee with an anti-aircraft outfit when the German attack began. (Jahi Chikwendiu/The Washington Post)

Albert Darago had never fired a bazooka before. He was an “ack-ack” guy, a fuse-cutter on a 90mm antiaircraft gun. But on Dec. 19, 1944, the brass was looking for volunteers to go after some German tanks. And Darago said sure.

He was a 19-year-old, color-blind draftee, a native of Baltimore’s Little Italy and a musician who played piano and clarinet. He was no hero, he said.

But when Adolf Hitler launched the massive attack that began World War II’s bloody Battle of the Bulge, he had not reckoned on GIs like Darago.

Seventy years ago, Darago, now 89, crept down a long, open hill with a loaded bazooka, figuring that he was going to die. He peeked over the top of a hedge and, at a distance of a few yards, fired at a German tank, disabling it.

He then scampered back up the hill under heavy fire. “We were in open territory,” he said. “You didn’t need a sharpshooter. Anybody with a gun could have killed us.”

He received the Distinguished Service Cross, the second-highest award for valor, after the Medal of Honor.

Tuesday marks the 70th anniversary of the start of the Battle of the Bulge, so called because of the bulge that the massive surprise German attack made on the Allied lines.

It was a full-scale, last-ditch assault by the German army on Hitler's western front, five months before the war in Europe ended.

About 19,000 Americans were killed in the wintry, month-long battle, 47,500 were wounded, and 23,000 were captured or were reported missing in action.

On Tuesday at noon, the Friends of the National World War II Memorial is scheduled to host a wreath-laying at the memorial on the Mall.

Also Tuesday at noon, the National Archives is scheduled to air a 90-minute documentary on the battle in its downtown Washington William G. McGowan Theater.

In addition, the Archives has on display, among other artifacts from the battle, the proud holiday message U.S. Gen. Anthony McAuliffe issued to his 101st Airborne Division troops besieged in the Belgian town of Bastogne on Christmas Eve, 1944.

Last week, "Al" Darago sat in an easy chair in his apartment in Parkeville, Md., with his medal framed on the wall above the piano, and said all he had done was help disrupt the Nazi timetable.

By December 1944, the Allies thought that Nazi Germany was near defeat. Allied armies had surged across France after the D-Day landings that June and had crossed into Germany in some places.

"We thought the war was about over," said retired Army Lt. Gen. Claude "Mick" Kicklighter, chairman of the Friends of the National World War II Memorial's board. "We were caught by, I think, almost total surprise."

On Dec. 16, 1944, the Germans attacked with more than 200,000 troops and hundreds of tanks along a 75-mile front through the rugged Ardennes forest in Belgium and Luxembourg.

The area, in part, was patrolled by relatively weak U.S. forces — green troops who had just arrived, and battle-weary soldiers who needed a rest, said National Archives senior curator Bruce Bustard, whose father fought in the battle.

For most of the green troops, "it was the first Christmas they'd been away from home," said retired Brig. Gen. Creighton W. Abrams Jr., whose father commanded a tank battalion in the battle. "And there they were fighting to liberate Europe."

As the German army overran U.S. defenses, they were met by pockets of stiff resistance, including some of which had hundreds of African American troops in the then-segregated Army.

The most famous resistance came from the 101st Airborne Division and other units in the Belgian crossroads village of Bastogne. When the Germans called on the beleaguered Americans there to surrender, their commander, McAuliffe, replied, "Nuts!"

But there were other stubborn American outposts, Bustard said, "small groups of U.S. soldiers who are delaying the German advance."

"Maybe it's a company," he said. "Maybe its a squad of U.S. soldiers that held on to a crossroads for an extra 10 or 15 minutes."

In Darago's case, it was a guy or two with a bazooka — a shoulder-fired antitank weapon.

He had been part of his artillery gun's loading team in the mobile 143d Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion. The gun fired a potent round that resembled a small missile, and it could be used against aircraft, tanks or troops.

On Dec. 19, 1944, his outfit was caught up in the fighting near a Belgian town called Stoumont, north of Bastogne and west of Malmedy, where German soldiers had executed American POWs two days earlier.

"We were coming into Stoumont," Darago said. "They told us to unload the ammunition . . . and start digging foxholes, because the Germans are right down that hill and [would] be up here pretty soon.'"

As Darago dug and as the ground around was hit by enemy fire, he met a friend, Roland Seamon, then 19, from Shinniston, W.Va.

"He said, 'Hey, Al, they're looking for volunteers to go down this hill and knock this tank out. They've got a couple tanks down there. We should go down and knock them down,' " Darago recalled.

They approached a lieutenant and Durago asked, "What did you have in mind?" The officer explained, and Darago and Seamon volunteered.

They were given bazookas, a weapon Darago said he had never fired before. "I didn't know the first thing about them," he said.

The officer advised the two to fire into the tanks' rear-engine compartment, according to a 1945 article about their deeds in the Stars and Stripes newspaper.

The bazookas were loaded, and the pair set off separately, Darago said.

There was no cover, and he headed down the hill under fire, according to his medal citation.

“I knew I was going to get it before I got down there, but God was with me,” he said.

At the bottom of the hill was a hedge. He stuck his weapon over it and spotted, not two but four German tanks backed up by infantry.

“I pulled the trigger,” he said. “And you never heard such a racket and noise when that thing hit. . . . I heard them hollering and screaming.”

He said he didn’t linger and ran back up the hill as German soldiers fired at him.

The lieutenant asked how he had done.

“I got a hit,” Darago said he responded. The officer said, “How about going down and making sure?”

With a reloaded weapon, he crept down the hill again, looked over the hedge and spotted his tank, apparently immobilized. He fired again and got another hit, and this time it caught fire.

Again, he escaped.

Seamon, who Darago said died several years ago, had similar success. Both received the Distinguished Service Cross, with its blue and red ribbon and cross and eagle medallion.

Last week, Darago,who has white hair and hearing aids, sat in the light of a reading lamp with his eyeglasses on a cord around his neck. His wife of 66 years, Dorothea, sat nearby.

“Believe it or not, I didn’t even think about it,” he said of volunteering for the task. “It was something that had to be done and we did it. . . . I never considered myself brave. . . . Somebody had to do it, and I was there.”

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All Across America, You'll Find These Huge Arrows On The Ground. And This Is Where They Lead To.

wimp.com

So many of us pack light for a road trip these days. Compass? Atlas? Directions? Too easy... it's all in your smartphone. So imagine the nightmare you could find yourself in should you lose your phone in the middle of nowhere.

Tim Davis

It's hard to imagine trekking across the US without a digital companion, but sprinkled helpfully across the country are giant 70-foot arrows to help guide you back to safety. They're from the pre-digital age of US mail delivery.

Clay Fraser

Overgrown with weeds and cracks, this long concrete arrow will point your way out of the desert.

Core77

U.S. Air Force

Core77

Because the US Postal Service started using cross-country air mail before the days of getting reliable radio in their army surplus planes, the US Postal Service installed these arrows for the flyer's safety. The line of the beacons bisects the country longitudinally from San Francisco

to New York City.

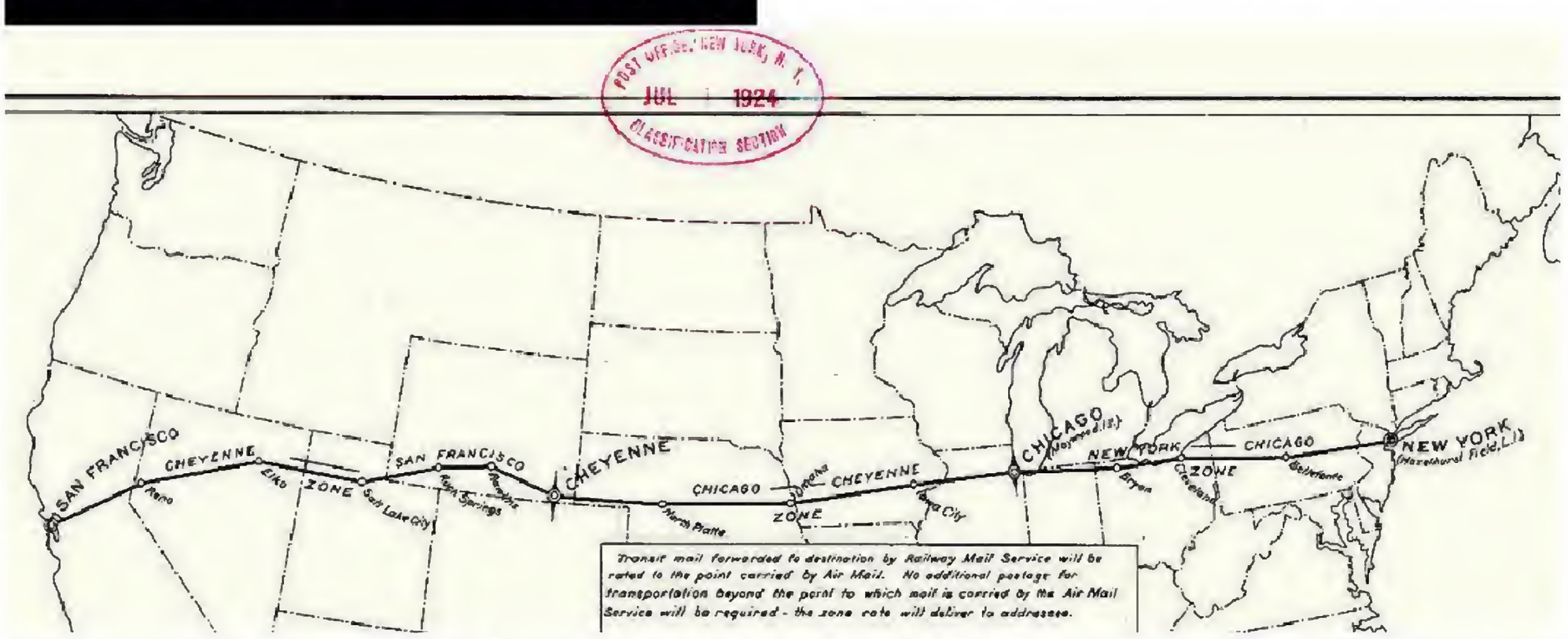
Core77

The Federal government installed the concrete arrows in 1924 to be positioned next to a 50-foot tall tower with a rotating gas-powered light. These were supposed to be visible from 10 miles high for lost pilots. Here is a model of the beacon and arrow system at the International Plastic Modelers Society Nationals contest in Loveland, CO.

EAA Forum

MessyNessyChic

During World War II, advances in radio had rendered the beacons and arrows obsolete and the government dismantled the metal towers for the war effort. There is a small effort to preserve these beacons before they vanish completely. Here is a fully restored tower and generator shack in New Mexico.



Cibola County Historical Society

Road trip, anyone?

Las Vegas Review Journal

Credit: Messy Nessy Chic

Wimp.com

Ancient Amulet Discovered with Curious Palindrome Inscription

by Owen Jarus, Live Science Contributor | January 01, 2015 06:00am ET

The inscription side of the amulet contains a Greek inscription.

The amulet contains a Greek inscription, 59 letters long, which reads the same backwards as it does forwards, a feature known as a palindrome. The three letters at the very bottom, EAI, were squeezed in and are hard to read. The amulet is about 1.4 inches by 1.6 inches (34.9 millimeters by 41.2 millimeters) in size. The inscription translates as "Iahweh is the bearer of the secret name, the lion of Re secure in his shrine." Although the translation doesn't read as a palindrome, the original ancient Greek text does.
Credit: Photo by Marcin Iwan, artifact from the excavations of Jagiellonian University in Krakow at Paphos Agora
View full size image

An ancient, two-sided amulet uncovered in Cyprus contains a 59-letter inscription that reads the same backwards as it does forwards.

Archaeologists discovered the amulet, which is roughly 1,500 years old, at the ancient city of Nea Paphos in southwest Cyprus.

One side of the amulet has several images, including a bandaged mummy (likely representing the Egyptian god Osiris) lying on a boat and an image of Harpocrates, the god of silence, who is shown sitting on a stool while holding his right hand up to his lips. Strangely, the amulet also displays a mythical dog-headed creature called a cynocephalus, which is shown holding a paw up to its lips, as if mimicking Harpocrates' gesture. [The 7 Most Mysterious Archaeological Finds on Earth]

On the other side of the amulet is an inscription, written in Greek, that reads the same backwards as it does forwards, making it a palindrome. It reads:

ΙΑΕW

ΒΑΦΡΕΝΕΜ

ΟΥΝΟΘΙΛΑΡΙ

ΚΝΙΦΙΑΕΥΕ

ΑΙΦΙΝΚΙΡΑΛ

ΙΘΟΝΥΟΜΕ

ΝΕΡΦΑΒW

ΕΑΙ

This translates to "Iahweh(a god)is the bearer of the secret name, the lion of Re secure in his shrine."

Researchershave found similar palindromes elsewhere in the ancient world writes Joachim Śliwa, a professor at the Institute of Archaeology at Jagiellonian University in Kraków, Poland, in an article recently published in the journal Studies in Ancient Art and Civilization.

Śliwa notes that the scribe made two small mistakes when writing this palindrome, in two instances writing a "ρ" instead of "v."

The amulet was discovered in the summer of 2011 by archaeologists with the Paphos Agora Project. Led by Jagiellonian University professor Ewdoksia Papuci-Wladyka, this team is excavating an ancient agora at Nea Paphos, and uncovered this amulet during their work. Agoras served as gathering places in the ancient world.

Amulets like the one found at Nea Paphos were made to protect their owners from danger and harm, Papuci-Wladyka told Live Science in an email.

Christians and pagans

During the 5th and 6th centuries, Cyprus was part of the Eastern Roman Empire. The Roman Empire had split in two during the 4th century, with Cyprus falling under control of the east. When the Western Roman Empire fell during the 5th century, the Eastern Roman Empire continued to flourish and became what is sometimes called the Byzantine Empire.

The amulet has several images on the side opposite the inscription.

The amulet has several images. At the bottom, there is a mummy (likely the Egyptian god Osiris) wrapped in bandages, lying on a boat. Above the mummy, there is an image of Harpocrates, a god of silence, shown sitting on a stool. Harpocrates' right hand is raised up to his lips and there is a scepter in his left hand. To the right of Harpocrates there is a dog-headed creature called a cynocephalus that has a paw beside its lips, mimicking Harpocrates gesture. There

is a snake between the cynocephalus and Harpocrates, the snake's head facing Harpocrates. There are also depictions of a crocodile, bird (likely a rooster), half moon and a star.
Credit: Photo by Marcin Iwan, artifact from the excavations of Jagiellonian University in Krakow at Paphos Agora
View full size image

By the 5th century, Christianity was the official religion of the Eastern Roman Empire, and as time went on, traditional polytheistic (also called pagan) practices came under tighter restrictions and bans. Nevertheless, some people continued to practice the old beliefs, worshipping the traditional gods.

This amulet adds to evidence that people practiced traditional, polytheistic beliefs on Cyprus for an extended time, Papuci-Wladyka said. She notes that a structure called the Villa of Theseus has a mosaic with pagan elements that was likely repaired as late as the 7th century A.D.

It "rather seems that Christian and pagan religions coexisted in Paphos in times of [the] amulet being in use," Papuci-Wladyka told Live Science in an email.

Strange iconography

Despite that coexistence, the amulet has several unusual features that suggest its creator didn't fully understand the mythological characters depicted.

"It must be stated that the depiction is fairly unskilled and schematic. It is iconographically based on Egyptian sources, but these sources were not fully understood by the creator of the amulet," Śliwa wrote in the journal article.

For instance, rather than sitting on a stool, Harpocrates should be sitting on a lotus flower, with legs drawn up, Śliwa said. Additionally, the dog-headed cynocephalus should not be mimicking Harpocrates. In "the classic version, the cynocephalus faces Harpocrates with paws raised in adoration," Śliwa wrote."We can find no justification for the cynocephalus's gesture of raising its right paw to its lips in a manner similar to Harpocrates."

Even stranger is the fact that Harpocrates and the cynocephalus have crisscrossing lines on their bodies, which suggest the ancient artist thought these figures should be mummified along with Osiris. While the cynocephalus can be shown with mummy bandages, Harpocrates is not supposed to have them. Mummy bandages have "no justification in the case of Harpocrates," Śliwa wrote.

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Angry nudists tackle man they thought was filming people on secluded beach

mirror.co.uk

Getty

A group of nudists chased and pinned down a man they believed was carrying out secret filming on their beach.

The naked beachgoers confronted the man - who was also nude - over a concealed camera he had in an ice box which was pointing towards a couple.

He initially moved further away but when another nudist raised concerns he then tried to flee.

A witness who gave his name only as George, said he was among several people who gave chase along Adelaide's Maslin Beach in Australia.

"A couple of my friends noticed this guy rearranging his esky and one of them said 'are there holes in the esky' ... one woman walked past and saw a video camera set up inside," said told Adelaide Now.

"It had this wooden setup inside where he could put this little handicam and it had three or four holes where he could position this wooden frame and put the camera inside to line up with the hole."

"At one point there were about eight people surrounding this guy, he claimed you're going to ruin my life, we said you've done this to yourself," he said.

"We said we're going to wait for the cops to come and if they say it's okay to film people naked without them knowing then it's not a problem but if they say it's not okay then you are in trouble."

George said the incident had shaken Maslin Beach regulars, who he said always looked out for each other's welfare.

"Some people were quite agitated, one couple packed up and were ready to leave because they couldn't handle having him around," he said.

"I have been going down there for eight years and I have never seen anyone chasing anyone else down the beach."

George said the man was naked other than wearing an Akubra hat, and was aged in his late 40s or early 50s with greying hair and tattoos.

An SA Police spokesman confirmed officers were called to the scene but released the man with a warning because there was no hard evidence he was filming beachgoers.

George said the police called to the scene were understandably bemused by the incident.

"I don't know what a cop's normal Saturday or Sunday at work is like, but I doubt it involves them interviewing a naked guy on a beach with a bunch of naked people standing around them," he said.

The southern section of Maslin Beach was designated as Australia's first nude beach in 1975.

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Argentina president adopts boy to stop werewolf curse

DAVID HARDING

nydailynews.com

Handout/Getty Images President of Argentina Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner.

Argentina's president has adopted a young Jewish boy as her godson to stop him turning into a werewolf.

Yair Tawil was adopted in a ceremony which took place because of Argentinian folklore, reports the Independent.

He is the first Jewish boy to be adopted, as the practice only applied to Catholics until 2009.

According to tradition in the country, the seventh son born to a family turns into a werewolf, a feared "el lobison".

Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner via Facebook President of Argentina adopts Jewish godson to 'stop him turning into a werewolf', as per Argentine tradition.

The creature only shows its true nature on the first Friday after the boy's 13th birthday, turning the teenager into a demon at midnight during every full moon.

Legend has it that the lobison feeds on unbaptized babies.

Although the story may now seem fanciful, fear of the werewolf-like creature was so widespread in 19th century Argentina that some families even murdered their babies.

To stop the practice happening the Argentine president began adopting babies.

Any family now which has seven sons or daughters get the president as their official godparent, a gold medal and a full educational scholarship, reports the Independent.

President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchhner described the adoption as a "magical moment" and called the Tawils a "marvelous family".

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Attendance jumps at clothing-optional church

Posted: 8:00 a.m. Friday, Dec. 12, 2014

krmg.com

File photo photo

It brings new meaning to being dressed in your "Sunday finest."

The pastor of the Whitetail Chapel wants his congregation to be comfortable, even if that means being nude.

'When he [Jesus] was born, he was naked, when he was crucified, he was naked and when he arose, he left his clothes in the tomb, and he was naked." Alan Parker told CNN.

"If God made us that way why can that be wrong," he continued.

Members don't have to worship in the buff, any form of dressed or undressed is fine with Parker.

"We are human beings. We all have scars," Parker began. "It is about learning to love and accept that."

One churchgoer told iPost why they love the church, and its atmosphere. "There is no pressure to be anything other than who you are."

The Whitetail Chapel is part of the Whitetail Nudist Resort.

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Axehandle Hound

wikia.com

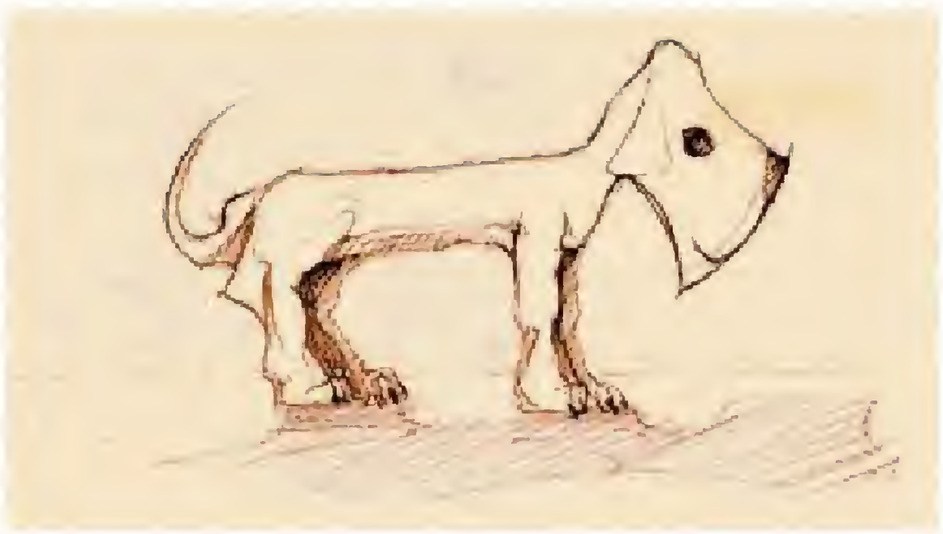

Illustration of Axehandle Hound

The **Axehandle Hound** (sometimes spelled as axhandle hound, ax-handle hound, or similar) is a fearsome dog originated from Wisconsin and Minnesota, it has a slender body in the shape of a handle of an axe and a head the shape of an axe head, it also has short stubby legs.

Despite its dangerously shaped head, the Axehandle Hound was not known to be deadly. However it would pester lumberjacks by stealing any axe handles left unattended and storing them away to be eaten. This nocturnal creature travels from camp to camp searching for its next meal. In Minnesota, there is a canoe-access campground named Ax-Handle Hound after the folklore creature. It can be found on the Little Fork River near Voyageurs National Park and very near the town of Linden Grove.

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Baby Jesus Stolen From Church And Replaced With Pig's Head

huffingtonpost.com

Posted: 12/26/2014 12:36 pm EST Updated: 12/27/2014 12:00 pm EST
7News Boston WHDH-TV

A baby Jesus was stolen from a Massachusetts church's Nativity scene and replaced with a pig's head.

HAVERHILL, Mass. (AP) — A mayor in Massachusetts is outraged that someone stole a baby Jesus statue from a church's Nativity scene and replaced it with a pig's head.

Haverhill Mayor James Fiorentini says the desecration has "all the elements of a hate crime."

The parish priest noticed the statue had been taken from the creche at Sacred Hearts Roman Catholic Church on Christmas morning.

Police say the pig's head left in its place appears to have been recently severed, and investigators are seeking help from butcher shops and pig farms. Police say the perpetrator could face animal cruelty charges.

Meanwhile, a neighbor replaced the baby Jesus with one from her own creche.

The baby Jesus figurine was also stolen from the Nativity scene on Greenfield Town Common, likely before dawn on Christmas Eve.

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THE death of a ten-day-old baby in Sitio Magay, Barangay Tangke, Talisay City yesterday dawn baffled authorities, including a church official.

But the family of John Edison Malacay believed a paranormal creature was responsible for their loved one's death.

The newborn was seen by his parents with blood oozing from his mouth and nose. His navel also swelled up with marks that looked like it had been drained.

Advertisement

Visit

The discovery of John Edison's condition came after his grandfather, Virgil Abarquez, visited their house past 5 a.m.

To his surprise, Virgil saw bloodstains in the kitchen area and immediately called Kimberly, the baby's 18-year-old mother.

"Naa lage'y lama sa dugo diri sa lamesa?" he asked.

Virgil only made a stopover at his daughter's house on his way to gofishing.

Kimberly woke up to hear her father's voice and went into the kitchen.

She also noticed the red marks scattered on the floor, which she suspected was done by rats.

"Basin mga ilaga rana nga nag-away," she answered.

When Kimberly went back to the bed to check her son, she saw blood marks on John Edison's face.

The baby was placed at the center of the bed where his parents slept by his side.

John Edison was rushed to the Talisay City District Hospital, but was declared dead on arrival.

John Edison was described to be a healthy baby and had a fair complexion. He was supposed to be baptized in January during the celebration of a fiesta in their area.

Kimberly, in an interview, said she and her husband didn't notice any noise or movement in their house or at the rooftop at that time.

Stains

However, one of Kimberly's aunts who lived nearby saw bloodstains on their rooftop.

Neighbors reportedly noticed sounds from a bird locally known as "kikik."

The baby's family and neighbors suspected someone that transforms into a supernatural form was responsible for John Edison's death.

'Not paranormal'

Meanwhile, SPO4 Daniel Tarucan of Talisay City Police Station refused to believe the death of the baby involved a paranormal creature.

"Nag-lisud ug nag-libug gyud mi. We will at least try our best to come up with a conclusion," he said.

Msgr. Esteban Binghay, on the other hand, urged the police to conduct a thorough investigation to establish the baby's cause of death.

Binghay, episcopal vicar of the Cebu South District, called on the public not to easily believe the baby was bewitched.

"Wa ko kadungog nga naay ungo sa Christmas. Naa na sa Holy Week hinuon (I haven't heard of a ghoul on Christmas. But there is on the Holy Week)," he said.

Published in the Sun.Star Cebu newspaper on December 20, 2011.

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Baku: The Legend of the Dream Eater

1 December, 2014 - 12:36mrreese

Baku: The Legend of the Dream Eater

The baku, otherwise known as the 'dream eater', is a mythological being or spirit in Chinese and Japanese folklore which is said to devour nightmares. The baku cannot be summoned without caution, however, as ancient legends say that if the baku is not satisfied after consuming the nightmare, he may also devour one's hopes and dreams.

Tales of the baku devouring nightmares originated in Chinese folklore, and later appeared in Japanese folklore between the 14th and 15th centuries, in what was known as the Muromachi period. While the baku is a spiritual being, it has a well-defined appearance. It takes on the form of a chimera – a mythological beast comprised of a variety of parts from other animals. The baku is typically depicted with a bear's body, an elephant's nose, a tiger's feet, an oxen tail, and rhinoceros eyes. According to legend, the baku was created by the spare pieces that were left over when the gods finished creating all other animals.

Sculpture of Baku, Konnoh Hachimangu Shrine, Shibuya, Tokyo, Japan (Wikipedia)

Sculpture of Baku, Konnoh Hachimangu Shrine, Shibuya, Tokyo, Japan

Descriptions and beliefs in the baku have changed throughout the years. In ancient Chinese legends, the baku was an animal that was hunted for its pelt. Whomever killed a baku would use a blanket made from the pelt as a talisman, or an object with magical powers, which would protect them from evil spirits. This practice evolved into one where a pelt was not necessary, and the display of a baku image over the bed would repel evil spirits. It wasn't until the baku legends made their way to Japan that the figure was viewed as a dream-eater. With this transition, the stories of Baku became consistent, and he has continued to be viewed as a dream-eater to this day.

Legend has it, that a person who wakes up from a bad dream can call out to baku. A child having a nightmare in Japan will wake up and repeat three times "Baku-san, come eat my dream. Baku-san, come eat my dream. Baku-san, come eat my dream." Legends say that the baku will come into the child's room and devour the bad dream, allowing the child to go back to sleep peacefully. However, calling to the baku must be done sparingly, because if he remains hungry after eating one's nightmare, he may also devour their hopes and desires as well, leaving them to live an empty life. The baku can also be summoned for protection from bad dreams prior to falling asleep at night. To this day, it remains

common for Japanese children to keep a baku talisman at their bedside.

Sculpture of Baku and Lion, Konnoh Hachimangu Shrine, Shibuya, Tokyo, Japan

Sculpture of Baku and Lion, Konnoh Hachimangu Shrine, Shibuya, Tokyo, Japan (Wikipedia)

Today you can find several modern representations of the baku. Occasionally, a baku is shown in a form that represents a tapir, as opposed to the traditional chimera form. In 1984, Oshii Mamoru's animated film, 'Beautiful Dreamer', depicted a baku as a tapir. Later, a baku took on a tapir-like form in Pokemon in the Drowzee/ Hypno and Munna/ Musharna characters, and the popular Digimon (virtual pet monster) also has a character called Bakumon or Tapirmon, that bears similarity to the baku.

The idea of being able to summon a baku to prevent or end a nightmare is one that can be understood across various cultures and different time periods, and the use of talismans or symbols of protection for sleep are a common thread seen throughout history. The baku has remained a steady figure in nightmare prevention throughout the years, in both chimera and tapir form, and it is likely to remain a figure for many years to come.

Featured image: Artist's depiction of a baku standing over a sleeping child (hyakumonogatari.com)

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By M R Reese

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Bare-Fronted Hoodwink

The bare-fronted hoodwink is an extremely shy species of bird. To date it has never been fully observed. In fact, its existence has only been surmised thanks to the efforts of ornithologist M.F. Meiklejohn who conducted a careful study of birds "partially seen or indeterminately heard." Meiklejohn advised that bird watchers in the field could recognize the species by its "blurred appearance and extremely rapid flight away from the observer." He also noted that amateur bird watchers appeared to have more luck spying it than did more experienced observers. The photo to the right shows a museum curator's effort to guess at what the hoodwink might look like. This specimen was exhibited at the Royal Scottish Museum in Edinburgh on April 1, 1975.

Yes, that's it! I have almost seen this creature several times. It is good to see the actual photograph of one!
Posted by Kenneth Murray on Wed May 26, 2004 at 08:48 PM
This sounds like the dominant species of avian here in the central Virginia hardwood forests - the "camo pigeon." There seem to be two varieties, of which only the one marked with green oak-leaf patterns is active during the day. The black camo pigeon is nocturnal. They fly as silently as an owl, and are almost impossible to detect until after they have left behind their "tracks" - shapeless and malodorous white spoor, often on reflective surfaces such as bronze statues or freshly waxed automobiles.
Posted by Thomas Davidson in Richmond, VA on Mon Jun *win* 14, 2004 at 03:58 PM

O, shy bird of flight!
Wandering through the dark night
hoodwink is thy name.
Posted by #1F in NNVA on Wed Nov 22, 2006 at 08:28 PM

Seen by amateurs
Blurred when it's moving
Hoodwink must be shy
Posted by J on Sat Nov 25, 2006 at 03:19 AM

Hoodwink run away;
Come again another day;
I must see your grace.
Posted by Dave on Sun Mar 16, 2008 at 01:46 PM

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Colossal peat bog discovered in Congo

27 May 2014

bbc.com

A vast peatland has been discovered in a remote part of Congo-Brazzaville.

The bog covers an area the size of England and is thought to contain billions of tonnes of peat.

Scientists say investigating the carbon-rich material could shed light on 10,000 years of environmental change in this little-studied region.

Dr Simon Lewis, from the University of Leeds, said: "It's remarkable that there are parts of the planet that are still uncharted territory."

He added: "Few people venture into these swamps as they are quite difficult places to move around in and work in."

Satellite images initially hinted at the presence of the enormous tropical peatland, but an expedition, starting from Itanga village in April, confirmed it was there.

The discovery team, from the University of Leeds, the Wildlife Conservation Society-Congo and Congo-Brazzaville's Marien Ngouabi University, had to contend with dwarf crocodiles, gorillas and elephants as they explored the area. But they said the biggest challenge was soggy feet.

> Peatlands, generally, have been a big carbon sink over the past 10,000 years"

Dr Lewis, who was working with PhD student Greta Dargie, added: "You can only walk on these areas for a couple of months a year, right at the end of the dry season, so you have to time it right. Even then it is still wet every day.

"We were inside the swamp for three weeks, and the only time we had dry feet was when we were asleep in our tents. To place the tent, you have to build a platform because the ground is permanently water-logged."

The team estimates that the bog covers between 100,000 and 200,000 square kilometres (40,000 to 80,000 sq miles), with the peat-layer reaching up to 7m (23ft) beneath the ground. It spreads into the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The researchers believe it holds billions of tonnes of partially decayed vegetation.

"Peatlands are formed because the plant matter going into the soil is not fully decomposed," Dr Lewis explained.

"It requires slow conditions for the decomposition, so you naturally find most peatlands are in the cold zones. It's rare to find them in the wet and warm tropics, so that makes this an unusual discovery."

The team took samples of the Congo peat to bring back to the UK to analyse

Because the area holds so much organic matter it means a large amount of carbon is locked into the ground.

The scientists say analysing this material, which is thousands of years old, will help them to learn more about the Congo Basin's role in the world's past and present climate.

The team had to spend three weeks wading through water to explore the area

Dr Lewis said: "Peatlands, generally, have been a big carbon sink over the past 10,000 years. They have been taking carbon out of the atmosphere and storing it as peat for the long term.

"And what we've found in central Africa is another one of those areas, so it adds a little piece to that jigsaw puzzle of where all the carbon goes in the atmosphere, where the sources are and where the sinks are, particularly in the pre-industrial era.

"So we can reduce our uncertainty around the global carbon cycle before humans started changing it."

The scientists have taken samples of the peat back to the UK to confirm its age and analyse the vegetation that it holds.

While some peat bogs around the world are under threat, particularly from drainage to make way for agriculture, the team thinks the Congo peatland is safe for now.

Dr Lewis said: "Its remoteness naturally provides protection. And much of the area in the Republic of Congo is already a community reserve: it is managed by the Wildlife Conservation Society, the government and the local people. They have a management plan to manage the area and also increase their livelihoods and incomes."

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Czech deer still avoid Iron Curtain

23 April 2014

bbc.com

Deer near the town of Harrachov, Czech Republic - 8 April 2014

The red deer were tracked via GPS-equipped collars that sent data to computers

The Iron Curtain fell 25 years ago, but it seems that nobody told the deer.

A new study has found that a quarter of a century on, red deer on the border between the Czech Republic and old West Germany still do not cross the divide.

After tracking 300 deer, researchers said the animals are intent on maintaining the old boundaries.

One of the scientists involved told the BBC the deer are not ideological, "they are just very conservative in their habits."

During the Cold War, electric fences made the Czech-German boundary impossible to pass.

Czechoslovakia, where the Communists took power in 1948, had three parallel electrified fences, patrolled by heavily armed guards.

Nearly 500 people were killed when they attempted to escape.

Iron Curtain's electrified fence

This reconstruction in the Sumava National Park in the Czech Republic shows the

A reconstruction of the Iron Curtain's electrified fence in the Sumava National Park, Czech Republic - 8 April 2014

The researchers followed the movement of the 300 Czech and German deer via GPS-equipped collars, which sent data to computers.

Biologist Pavel Sustr, who led the seven-year project, said that even though the area is now forest and open land with no barrier, the deer still stick to their Czech or Bavarian sides.

"It was fascinating to realise for the first time that anything like that is possible," Mr Sustr said. "But the border still plays a role for them and separates the two populations."

He said that was remarkable because the average life expectancy for deer is 15 years and none living now would have encountered the barrier.

Scientists believe that fawns tend to follow mothers for the first year of their lives and develop a pattern in their movements, so the same area remains the habitat for each new generation.

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Nazi commando turned Irish farmer

29 December 2014

bbc.com

Otto Skorzeny pictured in his Nazi uniform, and working on his farm in County Kildare

He was Hitler's favourite Nazi commando, famously rescuing Mussolini from an Italian hilltop fortress, and was known as "the most dangerous man in Europe".

After World War Two, he landed in Argentina and became a bodyguard for Eva Perón, with whom he was rumoured to have had an affair.

So when Otto Skorzeny arrived in Ireland in 1959, having bought a rural farmhouse in County Kildare, it caused much intrigue.

At 6ft 4in and 18 stone, known as 'scarface' due to a distinctive scar on his left cheek, Skorzeny was an easily recognisable figure as he popped into the local post office.

Adolf Hitler shakes hands with his top commando, Otto Skorzeny

In Irish press reports at the time Skorzeny was portrayed as a glamorous cloak and dagger figure, as Dublin-based journalist Kim Bielenberg recalls.

'Military prowess'

"Skorzeny was depicted as the Third Reich's Scarlet Pimpernel. The tone in newspaper articles was one of admiration rather than repulsion.

"He seemed to be admired for his military prowess," he said.

But concerns about why this pin-up boy of the Nazi party had come to the country led to questions in the Irish parliament. What was Skorzeny doing there? Did he intend to start Nazi activities in Ireland?

Otto Skorzeny's presence in Ireland caused much intrigue in the Irish and English press

Born in Vienna in 1908, Otto Skorzeny joined the Austrian Nazi party in the early 1930s. At the outbreak of WW2 he was initially involved in fighting on the Eastern Front, taking part in the German invasions of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union.

'Most dangerous man in Europe'

By April 1943, he had been made head of German special forces, in charge of a unit of elite SS commandos.

When Hitler's ally Benito Mussolini was overthrown and imprisoned in Italy, Skorzeny was chosen by Hitler to lead the rescue mission.

Skorzeny and his men descended in gliders upon the remote Italian mountain-top hotel where Mussolini was held captive, overwhelming the Italian guards with the surprise attack and freeing the deposed dictator.

With this success, Skorzeny further enhanced his reputation with Hitler and was promoted to major.

He gained international renown when Mussolini was paraded in front of the media with Skorzeny at his side. Winston Churchill even described the mission as "one of great daring".

Otto Skorzeny with Benito Mussolini after the dictator's dramatic rescue in 1943

He became the Nazis' go-to man for such operations. Another occurred in 1944 when Skorzeny and his men captured the son of the Hungarian regent, Admiral Horthy. Securing Miklós Horthy Jr after a brief fire fight, Skorzeny's team then rolled him up in a carpet and put him on a plane to Berlin.

War crimes trial

Skorzeny's last major mission in WW2 was during the Ardennes offensive (more commonly known as the Battle of the Bulge), in December 1944.

Skorzeny commanded Operation Greif, where English-speaking Germans dressed in American uniforms used disguised tanks to get behind Allied lines.

The plan caused confusion and panic among the Allies.

On trial at Dachau

Rumours spread that Skorzeny's men were planning to assassinate General Eisenhower, with the increased security leaving Eisenhower temporarily confined to his Versailles headquarters during Christmas week.

Ten days after Hitler took his own life in May 1945, Skorzeny surrendered to the Americans.

At Dachau in 1947 he stood trial for war crimes, but the case collapsed and Skorzeny was acquitted.

Skorzeny still had to answer charges from other countries and remained held as a prisoner of war. Typically, he escaped - with the help of former SS comrades.

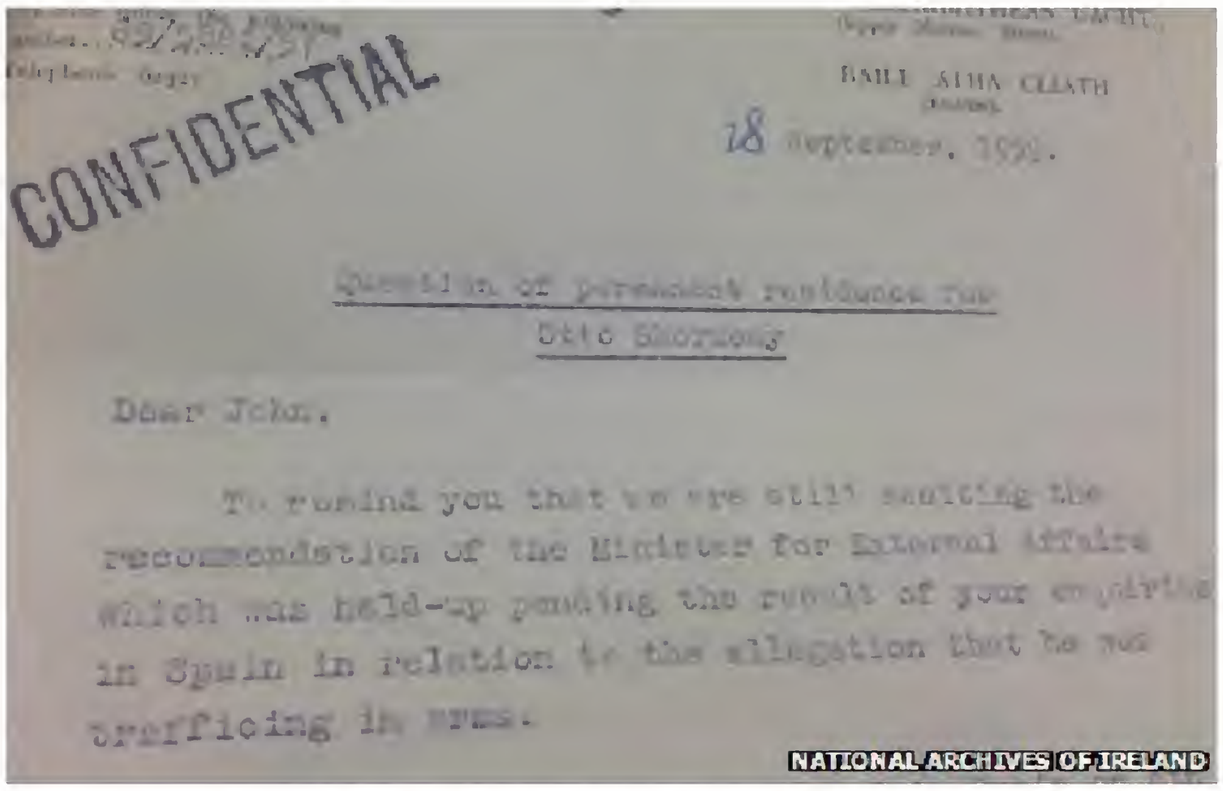
He ended up in Madrid and set up an import/export agency. Although much of its business was legitimate, this was said to have been a front for Skorzeny's involvement in organising the escape of wanted Nazis from Europe to South America.

Indisputably, Skorzeny made many trips to Argentina, where he met Argentine dictator Juan Perón and even became a bodyguard to Perón's wife Eva, reportedly foiling an attempt on her life.

Feted in Ireland

Skorzeny travelled from Madrid to Ireland in June 1957, where he had been invited to Portmarnock Country Club hotel in County Dublin.

Kim Bielenberg reflects on the welcome Skorzeny received at the reception held in his honour.



Skorzeny's residency issue was a matter of considerable debate

"He was feted by the Dublin social glitterati, including a young politician, Charles Haughey, who was later to become Ireland's most controversial prime minister."

"According to the Evening Press account, 'the ballroom was packed with representatives of various societies, professional men and, of course, several TDs [parliamentary representatives]'," the journalist said.

Bielenberg believes this warm welcome may have encouraged him to buy Martinstown House, a 160 acre farm and mansion in the Curragh, County Kildare, in 1959 and assesses the impression Skorzeny created with the locals.

"He could be seen driving across the Curragh in a white Mercedes and would visit the local post office for groceries.

"Reggie Darling, a local historian, told me he remembered coming across Skorzeny on the Curragh.

"He recalled him as a big man who stood out because of the scar across his face (which was the result of a duelling contest as a student), but that he wasn't particularly friendly and he didn't really mix with local people," he said.

'Escape route'

Rumours and conjecture surrounded Skorzeny's regular visits to Ireland over the coming years.

Documents at the Irish National Archives in Dublin reveal that he was granted temporary visas to stay in Ireland, on the undertaking that he would not enter Britain.

State records from 1958 mention his indignation at the continual refusal of the British authorities to allow him entry.

> It is generally understood that this man plays some part in neo-Nazi activities and, if so, he should not be allowed to use Ireland for that purpose"

Newspaper reports in the 1960s alleged that Skorzeny had opened up an escape route for ex-Nazis in Spain and that his farm in Ireland was a place where fleeing Nazis could hide, but no evidence was found to substantiate this claim.

Questions in the Dáil

In the post-war period, Europe was still haunted by the spectre of Nazism and there were concerns that it would return as a political force.

With that in mind, the former Irish minister for health Noel Browne was very concerned about Skorzeny's presence in Ireland and raised the matter in the Irish parliament (Dáil), in 1959.

The minister expressed concern that Skorzeny was engaging in "anti-Semitic activities".

On another occasion Browne told the Dáil: "It is generally understood that this man plays some part (in neo-Nazi activities) and, if so, he should not be allowed to use Ireland for that purpose."

There were a number of memos and letters involving Irish government departments, such as the Department of Justice and the Department of External Affairs, addressing concerns about Skorzeny's presence in Ireland.

When interviewed, Skorzeny denied that he was involved in Nazi activities or politics.

He said that he would like to buy horses and that one day he wished to retire to Ireland. But that did not happen and he was never granted a permanent Irish visa.

He lived out his remaining years in Madrid, where he died of cancer in 1975.

Skorzeny never denounced Nazism and was buried by his former comrades with his coffin draped in the Nazi colours.

Nazis in Ireland

In addition to Skorzeny, a number of high-profile Nazis, including Albert Folens and Helmut Clissman, came to Ireland in the aftermath of WW2.

Skorzeny's visa application

In Hidden History: Ireland's Nazis, a 2007 documentary by Irish state broadcaster RTÉ, presenter Cathal O'Shannon estimated that between 100 and 200 Nazis moved to Ireland.

O'Shannon, who was an Irish-born Royal Air Force (RAF) veteran, described how he felt that anti-British sentiment in Ireland led to Nazis receiving a warmer welcome than he did when he came home after the war.

Kim Bielenberg believes it is important to consider the context of the time.

"They must have felt reasonably welcome, and were probably left alone, or even feted, as Skorzeny was. I am not sure that the full horror of Nazi atrocities had sunk in in Ireland," he said.

"There also may have been an attitude among certain nationalists that 'my enemy's enemy is my friend'. Irish attitudes to Nazis changed from the 1970s on, as issues such as the Holocaust entered public consciousness."

Hitler assassination attempt

For Bielenberg there is also a personal link to Skorzeny, as he explains.

"Skorzeny was involved in rounding up and torturing members of the German resistance after their attempt on Hitler's life. One of these plotters was my own grandfather, Fritz von der Schulenburg", he said.

"After he was arrested with other resistance leaders, Skorzeny arrived and pulled off their military badges. The plotters were then forced to listen to a speech given by Hitler on the radio, confirming that the fuhrer was indeed still alive and well.

"My grandfather was executed in Berlin in August 1944."

"My mother came to live in Ireland and married the son of Peter and Christabel Bielenberg, associates of senior resistance figures. She lived in the same county as Skorzeny.

"I only discovered the house's past and the Skorzeny link when I went to dinner there with my German family just after her death."

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Romans balk at cobblestone 'sale'

31December2014 bbc.com

Last updated at 10:31 ET

Cobblestones at Piazza Venezia in central Rome

Rome's cobblestones pose a challenge for those in high heels, but are beloved by many residents

A proposal to rip up Rome's traditional cobbled streets and offer the stones to private businesses who carry out resurfacing works has caused consternation among some residents, it's reported.

Large areas of the city's historic centre, including major thoroughfares used by buses, are paved with cobbles. While they may add to the Italian capital's charm, the council wants to replace the stones with asphalt, saying it will make roads safer for drivers and pedestrians, and require less maintenance. Now city councillor Maurizio Pucci has suggested offering the old cobblestones to companies in exchange for carrying out the work. "The cobblestones have a flourishing market, both Italian and international," he tells the Corriere della Sera newspaper . "We will give them to businesses, they have value," he says.

But some Romans are unhappy about what they see as pieces of the Eternal City being sold off. Several internet users are in favour of the plan, saying the stones are noisy and unsafe, but many leave colourful, sarcastic comments. "These thieves have not yet finished stealing. Leave OUR cobblestones alone!" says one user on the Ansa news agency's website. "All the other ruins too, then: we'll do a clean sweep, just keeping the Colosseum and the Ara Pacis and the rest we'll sell to the Chinese," another writes. "Also included in the price a councillor for public works, brand new, never used!"

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British thank Japan grave family

30December2014

bbc.com

Last updated at 10:13 ET

A Japanese graveyard

The British Embassy in Tokyo has formally thanked a Japanese family for tending to the grave of a British teacher for 143 years, it's been reported.

Five generations of the Murai family have looked after the grave of Bernard George Littlewood, today located in the city of Kaga, The Asahi Shimbun website reports. Mr Littlewood had been in Japan to teach English, and died of smallpox in what is now the central Ishikawa Prefecture in the 1870s. With nobody responsible for looking after the grave site following a change in local governance, the Murai family took over because it was close to their own family plot, the website says. In early December, they were given a letter signed by the British ambassador to Japan, Timothy Hitchens, thanking them for their kindness. Kumiko Murai, 81, says she was "speechless" after receiving the letter, noting that the family continued to look after Mr Littlewood's grave through World War II, when Britain and Japan were enemies.

But they didn't know his true identity until recently. In the 1960s the occupant of the grave was identified as Philip Ward, an error put down to local confusion over the kanji characters inscribed on the tombstone. After extensive research by Susumu Koyata, who heads an international exchange group in Kaga, the grave was identified as belonging to Mr Littlewood, the website says.

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Just how important was Magna Carta?

31 December 2014

bbc.com

Last updated at 20:29 ET

A facsimile copy of the 1215 document, the Magna Carta in the Library at Salisbury Cathedral

This year people in the UK, US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and plenty of other nations will mark the 800th anniversary of Magna Carta. The document will be lauded for establishing one vital principle.

A new book about Magna Carta is published today which claims to offer new insights into one of the most famous documents in British history.

This year marks the 800th anniversary of the charter's first signing on 15 June 1215 at Runnymede on the banks of the Thames between Windsor and Staines.

The book by David Carpenter, professor of medieval history at King's College, London, contains a new translation of Magna Carta and more than 500 pages of historical background and commentary.

The charter was agreed between King John and a group of leading barons, led by Robert fitzWalter, exasperated at the king's arbitrary rule and high taxes. It was in effect a peace treaty designed to head off armed conflict. It failed.

Much of Magna Carta is impenetrable to modern readers, couched in medieval jargon and concerned with the detail of relations between the king and his most powerful feudal tenants. And the charter's most significant innovation, a "security clause" in which the king was subjected to the oversight of a panel of 25 barons, proved impossible to implement.

But the document quickly gained a central place in English political life and remains a touchstone of English liberties. However, few of us have actually read it.

This year's anniversary will be widely celebrated. Melvyn Bragg will present a four-part series on Radio 4 this month, and David Starkey will front a BBC Two documentary. On BBC Three you can watch Magna Carta 2.0, "a new documentary packed full of stunts, fun and comedy" and CBBC is offering a Horrible Histories on King John and Magna Carta.

What was Magna Carta?

- Magna Carta outlined basic rights with the principle that no-one was above the law, including the king
- It charted the right to a fair trial, and limits on taxation without representation

Lincoln Cathedral

- It inspired a number of other documents, including the US Constitution and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- Only three clauses are still valid - the one guaranteeing the liberties of the English Church; the clause confirming the privileges of the City of London and other towns; and the clause that states that no free man shall be imprisoned without the lawful judgement of his equals
- The British Library has two copies of the 1215 Magna Carta
- One original copy is owned by Lincoln Cathedral (pictured) and one by Salisbury Cathedral

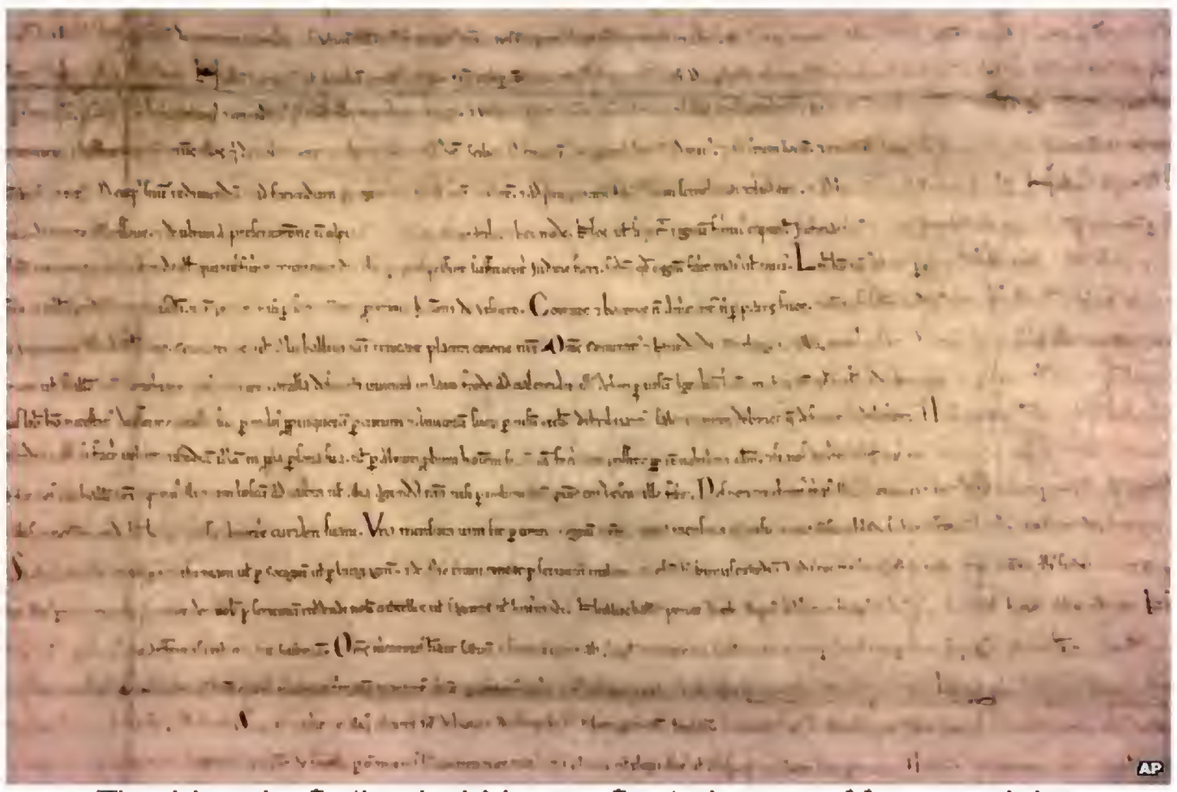
Magna Carta 800th Anniversary

Magna Carta - The British Library

A deputation of 800 American lawyers will be visiting Runnymede, there is a new Magna Carta cycle trail, an audio-visual display will tour Kent towns with Magna Carta associations, like Faversham and Rochester, and a new work has been commissioned from the artist Cornelia Parker.

The small Hampshire town of Odiham, which claims to be where John stayed before setting out for the negotiations at Runnymede, is getting in on the act with a Magna Carta Festival including a hog roast, morris dancing and a specially-commissioned church anthem with words by John's Archbishop of Canterbury, Stephen Langton, who played a key role in the drafting of the charter.

Magna Carta: Much of it is impenetrable to modern readers



The Lincoln Cathedral Magna Carta is one of four surviving examples of the 1215 parchment document out of 40 penned

And there will be numerous exhibitions at museums, libraries and cathedrals of medieval manuscripts of Magna Carta. You'll be able to see four examples at the Bodleian Library in Oxford, three on display in Durham and three at the Society of Antiquaries in London.

Most significant of all, in Salisbury, Lincoln and at the British Library there will be displays of the four surviving parchment copies (or "engrossments") of the original 1215 version, issued under King John's own seal. And in February the British Library will be bringing all four together. Just 1,215 people, chosen by ballot, will be able to see them.

David Carpenter's new book for the first time identifies one of the two British Library copies as the one originally sent to Canterbury Cathedral. He also uses recently identified drafts of the charter (they were previously thought to be unofficial copies of the final authorised version) to trace the way the text changed during five days of negotiations at Runnymede.

And he claims that Magna Carta guaranteed Scotland's survival as an independent state by reversing efforts by John to assert feudal overlordship of the kingdom.

The Magna Carta memorial at Runnymede

The Magna Carta memorial at Runnymede

In 1209 John had forced on William the Lion, King of Scots, a treaty at Norham whose text has been lost. Carpenter believes he has found a 14th Century document in the National Archives at Kew which preserves the terms of the treaty. In it, according to Carpenter's interpretation, William promises that his son Alexander will do homage to John not just for the lands (including the earldom of Huntingdon) which William held in England but for Scotland itself. Magna Carta, by contrast, spelt out that Alexander was to do homage only for the lands in England.

Famously, within weeks of its signing, Magna Carta was a dead letter. The king disowned it, it was condemned by the Pope, and John found himself at war with his rebellious barons. The

following year, 1216, a French army invaded in support of the rebels. Its leader, the French king's son Louis, claimed the English throne.

By then John was a sick man and he died at Newark in October 1216, five days after part of his baggage train was lost while crossing the Wash (the two events were not connected).

That should have been the end of it. But at this nadir of English royal fortunes the charter was resurrected as a last desperate throw by a handful of great lords loyal to John's successor, his nine-year-old son Henry. It was reissued, cutting the ground from under the rebels' feet by effectively conceding their demands. And in May 1217 Louis's army was defeated in a battle at Lincoln.

King John

Illustration of King John signing Magna Carta

- Born 1166 or 1167 in Oxford, youngest son of Henry II
- Came to throne in 1199 after his brother Richard ("Lionheart") died (following an earlier unsuccessful attempt to seize the throne while Richard was imprisoned in Germany)
- John's reign was marked by war with France - triggered by his second marriage
- War needed finance, and John became increasingly ruthless in levying taxes and exploiting feudal rights; this in turn led to civil discontent and rebellion by English barons
- After the barons seized London, John was forced to sign Magna Carta in 1215, but it failed to stop civil war
- John died in Newark Castle in 1216 after contracting dysentery in the east of England

Henry III reissued Magna Carta in modified form once again in 1217 and then in 1225 - it was this last version that became the definitive text. It was formally confirmed several more times by Henry and his successor Edward I - even though many of its provisions went rapidly out of date, and often weren't enforced even when they were relevant.

But that didn't matter. Magna Carta's significance was always symbolic rather than practical. According to Carpenter, "its arrival does mark a 'before' and 'after' in English history". For the first time Magna Carta established publicly the principle that the king was subject to the law.

A 1297 copy of Magna Carta,

1297 copy of Magna Carta, bearing the seal of Edward I

bearing the seal of Edward I

It also led indirectly to the development of a new kind of state, in which the money to govern the country came from taxation agreed by parliament by preventing the king from extracting money from his subjects in arbitrary ways. Magna Carta laid down that the king could not levy taxes "save by the common counsel of our kingdom" and set out how that counsel was to be obtained. Fifty years later England's first parliament was called.

As to all the modern-day brouhaha around the anniversary - that rests particularly on another principle bequeathed by the charter to subsequent generations, a principle fundamental to British law and the law of many other nations, including the United States.

Magna Carta's most famous clauses forbid the king to sell, deny or delay justice, and protect any free man from arbitrary imprisonment "save by the lawful judgement of his peers or by the law of the land".

"Free men" in 1215 accounted for less than half the population - the rest were serfs, to whom the charter did not apply. And "men" meant men - women, except for widows, merit barely a mention in Magna Carta.

But the principle was established. The law could serve as a bulwark against tyranny. And once established, it has never been revoked.

Magna Carta is considered by many to represent the foundation of democracy, but has its importance been exaggerated?

Is Magna Carta overrated? (September 2012)

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Donkey protest in central Nairobi

11December2014

bbc.com

Last updated at 10:32 ET

A crowd of people surrounding the donkeys

The donkeys were all emblazoned with the same message: "We're fed up"

A herd of donkeys has been dumped in Nairobi's central business district in an apparent political protest, it's been reported.

Each of the animals was spray-painted with the word "tumechoka", which is Swahili for "we're fed up", The Standard news website reports. A lorry was seen depositing the herd in the centre of the Kenyan capital, with the driver saying he'd been paid to drop them off. It's thought the protest was against rising insecurity in the country, as the website notes the "tumechoka" slogan was used in a street protest against a brutal bus attack in northern Kenya in November. As the donkeys were unloaded from the lorry, one activist was heard shouting "we are tired of this leadership," The Standard says. The scene attracted a large crowd, according to the BBC's Robert Kiptoo in Nairobi. "Police had a hectic time trying to control the crowd, which had gathered in one of the streets to take a glimpse of the graffiti and take photographs," he says. The animals are now being looked after by an animal welfare organisation. "We have taken the donkeys to our Moroto offices and arrested some people who are suspected to be involved in the evil act," a police officer tells The Star newspaper.

Kenya's government is under pressure to prevent further violence after a string of deadly attacks by Al-Shabab militants in Kenya. The bus attack in the northern Mandera region left 28 people dead, after gunmen singled out non-Muslim passengers. In September 2013, militants attacked Nairobi's Westgate shopping centre, in a protracted siege during which at least 67 people were killed.

Police officers trying to direct the donkeys

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Tree's 'EU food decorations' looted

11December2014

bbc.com

Last updated at 06:52 ET

A before and after view of the tree

The tree was adorned with EU delicacies, but they didn't last long, leaving its branches bare

A Christmas tree decorated with foreign food treats which are subject to a Russian import ban has been stripped bare, it's been reported.

Spanish mandarins, Polish apples and delicacies including prosciutto and foie gras were turned into Christmas ornaments by staff from the Russky Pioner magazine, and hung on a tree in Moscow's GUM department store. But now its tasty decorations have been stolen. "We found the tree almost bare," says editor-in-chief Andrey Kolesnikov on the magazine's website. "We gave the best of what we still had to our Christmas tree," he says, describing the theft as "cruel" and "barbaric". In August, Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev signed a decree banning the importation of numerous food products from the EU, US, Australia, Canada and Norway, in retaliation for sanctions imposed on Russia over its involvement in the Ukraine crisis.

"As a human I understand it. But it is inexcusable!" Mr Kolesnikov writes. "People, come to your senses! Will you soon start to eat each other?" But many people commenting on the magazine's Facebook page appear to be confused about the unconventional decorations. "Christmas trees in Russia are decorated strangely these days," says Tatyana Senkuvene. Another user suggests next time the food should be "nailed down", but adds that it would then probably "be taken away with the tree". Mr Kolesnikov says the magazine's staff will decorate the tree again, but they're not taking any chances. This time a CCTV camera will be installed nearby.

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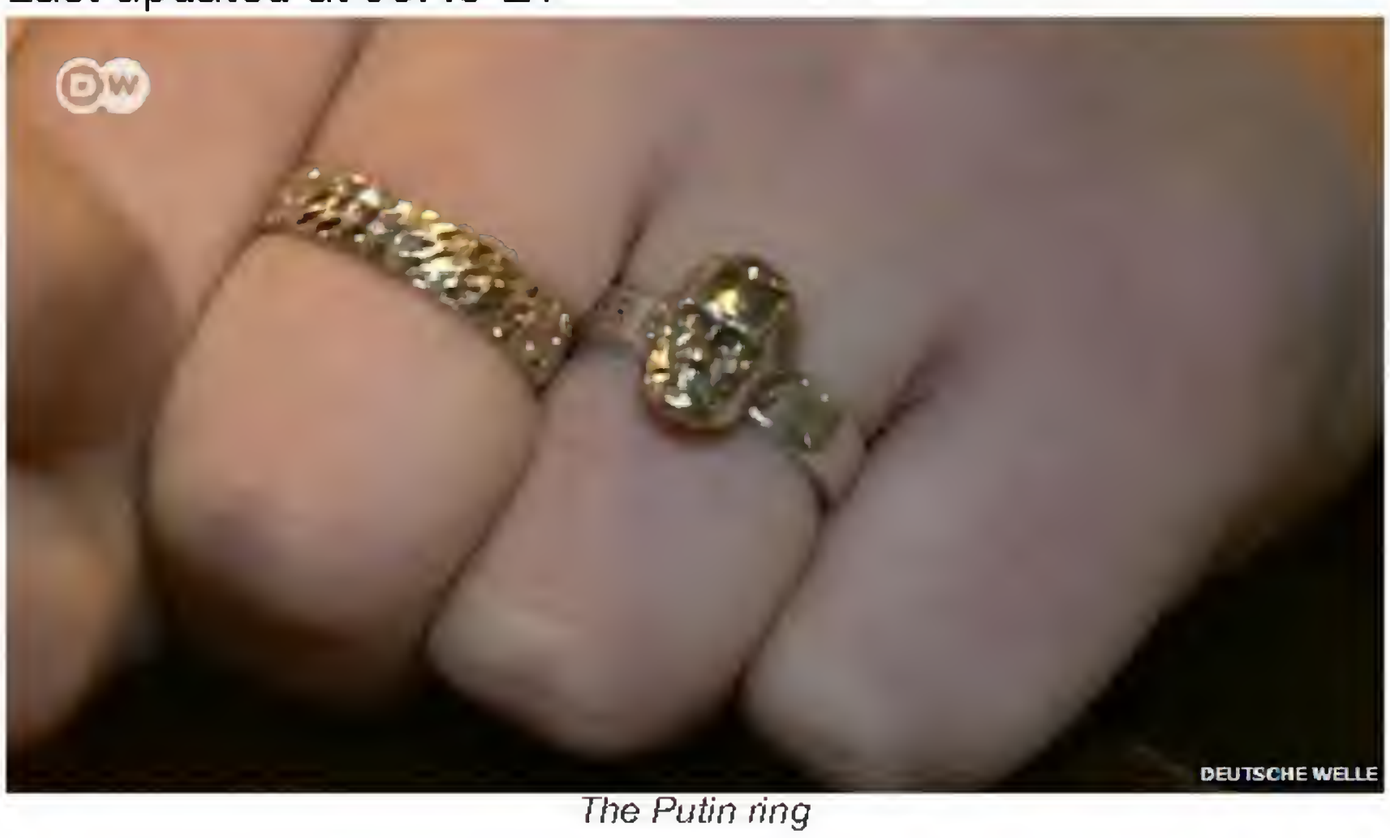
Putin inspires fashion label

31December2014 bbc.com

Last updated at 06:49 ET



The Putin ring

The label has plans for more products, including a Putin-inspired ballpoint pen

A fashion label is hoping to appeal to fans of Vladimir Putin by selling rings and clothing featuring the Russian president's face, it's been reported.

The Moscow-based brand is called Putinversteher - a German word meaning a Putin sympathiser - and its first product is a silver ring topped with the president's head, the German international broadcaster Deutsche Welle reports. Designer Gleb Krainik says he wants the label to become popular outside Russia, and that a German name was chosen in order to "engage people in a dialogue". "It let's them see a new perspective, and a certain ideology," he says. Mr Krainik has a history of pro-Kremlin activities, having previously worked for government-backed youth organisations, according to the Swiss newspaper Neue Zuercher Zeitung. He sees the fashion range as part of a worldwide "information war" in which Russia and especially Putin are often depicted in a bad light, it says. "The aim is to make it easier for the world to understand Russia," he tells the paper.

One hundred of the silver rings were made initially, all of which have been sold. One of them now adorns the hand of Sergei Maksimov, who tells Deutsche Welle that Mr Putin is his role model, and he wears the ring day and night. "I'd love to be just like Vladimir Putin," he says. "I admire him as a person, he's very manly and strong."

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Jubilee gifts for Singapore babies

30December2014 bbc.com

Last updated at 06:37 ET

A baby in a sling printed with "I'm a Golden Jubilee baby"

Parents will receive eight items for their new arrivals, including a baby sling, scrapbook and commemorative medallion

Singapore celebrates its golden jubilee in 2015, and the government is planning to give new arrivals a special treat to mark the occasion.

Babies born throughout the year will be welcomed to the world with a gift box containing a "balance of practical and meaningful items" chosen by the public, according to the scheme's official website. Alongside a baby sling, changing bag and clothes declaring "I'm a Golden Jubilee baby", parents will find a scrapbook to capture memorable moments, and a commemorative medallion. The objects were selected from ideas "lovingly contributed by Singaporeans from all walks of life", the website says, adding that the gift box is meant to symbolise "well-wishes from our generation to the next".

It will be available to all newborn Singapore citizens from 1 January, including those born abroad to a Singapore national, the government says. And it could be a bumper gift year for the 2015 babies, as more presents are being promised by a major bank, the Straits Times website reports. The bank's gifts include mittens, a "selfie stick" and - appropriately - a money box. But while in Singapore the presents mark a national celebration, elsewhere government welcome gifts are the norm. In Finland, expectant mothers have been given starter kits containing baby clothes, nappies and even a mini mattress, since the 1930s.

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The dead dog that changed colour twice

30 July 2014

bbc.com

London Jack after the restoration

London Jack after being restored to his original colour

From the Victorian era until after World War Two, charity collection dogs were a popular sight in British train stations. They continued their charitable calling even after death.

"Though dead, Jack is still on duty and solicits a continuance of your contributions in support of his good work for the Orphans." So reads the plaque in London Jack's glass display case at the Bluebell Railway museum.

The black retriever has spent almost a century - eight of his living years and a further 83 years as a stuffed corpse - collecting for good causes.

Once famous for patrolling London's Waterloo station, he was one of a group of celebrity dogs who made thousands of pounds for charity from the mid-Victorian era until the 1950s.

He and others like Brighton Bob, Bruce of Swindon, Chelmsford Brenda, Wimbledon Nell and Oldham's Rebel mixed with commuters, sometimes boarding trains on their own to encourage more giving by passengers. They barked, "shook hands" and performed tricks for money, their exploits frequently reported in the national and regional press.

London Jack - before restoration

London Jack before his restoration

"They were cuter than human beings and people responded to that," says Jan Bondeson, author of Amazing Dogs: A Cabinet of Canine Curiosities. "There were very many postcards printed of them.

"If the dogs were docile enough, they were allowed to walk around the stations on their own. But some were tethered in case they walked in front of a train."

This was not the only risk they faced. In 1896, a gang of criminals picked up Tim, an Irish terrier who worked at London's Paddington station, and held him upside down over a suitcase, shaking him to free up the coins from his collection box. When released, he bit one of his assailants on the calf.

Carlo - *Painting from 1912*

Painting by George Buckly of railway dog Carlo

Some dogs were less than honest themselves. Initially they collected coins in their mouths and gave them in, but secure boxes had to be tied to them after a journalist for a Christian magazine discovered in the 1860s that Brighton Bob was using some of his money to buy biscuits at a bakery.

The dogs, usually looked after and trained by railway staff, proved popular and lucrative. For this reason there was a whole line of London Jacks. The first, who came into service in 1894, disappeared in 1899, but was later found in a house in Soho, where he was being held by criminals, after a boy heard barking and informed the police.

He retired, died and was stuffed and put on display in a cabinet with a slot for coins at the front. "From his glass case at Waterloo station, he still appeals to the passengers who pass by," reported the Sphere newspaper in 1901. His son took over and was said to stop and look at his late father whenever he passed by.

The fifth Jack - the one now on display at the Bluebell Railway Museum in East Sussex - was born in 1917 and started collecting in 1923. He made more than £4,000 to help maintain an orphanage for railwaymen's children in Woking, Surrey.

A different "Jack" 1934

Passengers at Euston Station petting the "collecting dog", a retriever named Jack, in 1934

He wore, and still wears, a large collection of medals on his back, a silver one awarded for every £100 raised and a gold one for every £500.

In 1924 he was photographed with Jackie Coogan, the child star of Charlie Chaplin's hit comedy film The Kid, as he passed through Waterloo. The event caused a shortage of luggage porters, who rushed to view the meeting of celebrities.

By 1930, Jack's eyesight was going and he retired. The press showed him demonstrating to his successor how to board a train safely with a collection box.

He died the next year. He too was stuffed and mounted in a cabinet. But strangely at some stage during his journey from Waterloo to the Bluebell Railway, which bought him in 1967, he changed colour.

Tim

BBC Your Paintings

Find more canine portraits - including collecting dogs such as L Magill's portrait of Tim (above) - on BBC Your Paintings

For many years he was regarded as a golden, rather than a black, retriever. A drawing of him featured on a first-day cover sent in 1979 is coloured yellow.

"He was in a case for a number of years and must have become bleached by the light over time," says Colin Tyson, who edits the Bluebell Railway's quarterly newsletter.

Jack went for a restoration five years ago and was dyed black once more after the taxidermist discovered that, judging by his roots, he was not a natural blond. He returned to the Bluebell Railway, where he still collects. For a while his takings went on funding his own renovation costs. Now these are paid off, he collects for Woking Homes, on the site of the old orphanage, which cares for retired railway staff.

"People go to a museum like ours expecting to see preserved locomotives and carriages, not preserved dogs," says Tyson. "But Jack is very popular, especially with the kids. Maybe they expect him to raise a paw when they put a coin in." He doesn't.

Station Jim

Station Jim

- According to the station inscription at Slough, Jim arrived when he was three months old. He was described as a "ball of wool that could be carried around in an overcoat pocket"
- He collected for the Great Western Railways Orphans' Fund, but because of ill health, managed to collect only £40
- He once boarded a train and travelled alone to Leamington. Another time, he turned up at Paddington Station
- He could sit up and beg, bow or stand on his hind legs. A dropped, lighted match would be "extinguished with a growl"

Most of the stuffed former station dogs have disappeared or are in private ownership. The most prominent of those still on display is Station Jim, who died aged just two in 1896. He remains in a case on platform five of Slough station. A spoof Twitter feed shares his imaginary observations.

Jim was part of what Bondeson calls the "golden age" of station dogs. By the time Britain's

railways were nationalised in 1948, numbers had dwindled. An Airedale terrier called Laddie, who worked at Waterloo until 1956, is thought to have been the last to work the platforms. Stuffed animals were also gradually removed.

"Under the more corporate British Rail, they didn't want things like dead dogs in stations," says Tyson. "But animals like London Jack and Station Jim are a proud part of our railway heritage. They helped a lot of people."

London Jack - 1894-1900 Waterloo Station

The original London Jack collected at Waterloo Station between 1894 and 1900

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The dump that holds the secrets of the disappeared

29December2014

bbc.com

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Once the murder capital of the world, the Colombian city of Medellin, has been transformed into an attractive and vibrant city. But on the outskirts there is a dump where people say the truth lies buried - the bodies of dozens of people who were "disappeared" in years of bloody civil conflict.

Margarita Selene Restrepo stares out over the corrugated roofs of Comuna 13 - one of Medellin's poorest and most violent districts. From here, a few steps from her home, she can see a huge, deforested, earthen scar on the hillside opposite. In Spanish it is known as *la escombrera* - the dump. And Margarita can just make out areas recently fenced off with flimsy green plastic.

"Every day when I look across there it causes me such a lot of sadness. If she's there, she's so close. Yet at the same time, she's so far away."

Margarita is talking about her daughter, Carol Vanesa Restrepo. She was 17 when she disappeared in October 2002, and her mother believes her remains are buried in a disused part of the tip. She hopes that one day soon they will be exhumed.

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And she is vigilant - every day she checks to make sure no more waste is deposited anywhere near the green cordons.

For many years, Comuna 13 was under the sway of left-wing guerrilla groups. The state had little influence here, but Operation Orion - launched just before Carol Vanesa disappeared - would change that.

They came in indiscriminately on the pretext of getting rid of the guerrillas"

"The state decided it had to take back control of Comuna 13," says Jenny Pearce, professor of Latin American politics at the University of Bradford.

"But the way they did it seems to have been in alliance with paramilitary groups. And the paramilitaries subsequently went in and 'disappeared' at least 200-300 people from the area. So the bodies at la escombrera are the victims of what can only be called a state crime."

Locals remember the operation and its aftermath as a period of "absolute terror".

"There were more than 1,000 men from the state's forces, two helicopters and more than 800

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paramilitaries," says Jeihhco, the founder of a cultural centre in Comuna 13. "They came in indiscriminately on the pretext of getting rid of the guerrillas."

When the army withdrew after four days, the paramilitaries became the new lords and masters of Comuna 13. Carol Vanesa Restrepo and two of her friends have not been seen since.

Families of the disappeared - women like Margarita - have been calling for la escombrera to be excavated for more than a decade. Now the city's government has begun technical assessments of part of the site identified by a former paramilitary commander, known by his alias, Movil 8.

"He grew up in Comuna 13, so he knew the area well and was able to identify places he thought bodies had been dumped by using landmarks like trees and electricity pylons," says Jorge Mejia Martinez of the Medellin mayor's office, who is overseeing plans to excavate the site.

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Excavating the site is complicated and parts of the dump are still used for construction waste

There is uncertainty about the number of people buried beneath the tons of earth and rubble collected from building sites and dumped here. It is believed some were discarded here before the killings in 2002, and that the paramilitaries were not the only perpetrators.

Find out more

Listen to Linda Pressly's report on Assignment on BBC World Service on Thursday 1 January or catch up later on iPlayer

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"The story began much earlier with the left-wing guerrillas," says Martinez.

"Other criminal groups have been active too, and bodies may have been brought from other parts of the city, and even from the wider region."

Some even believe the disposal of human remains is still continuing.

Medellin became the most murderous city on the planet in the days of Pablo Escobar -

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the man who industrialised the processing and export of cocaine in the 1970s.

But Escobar's Medellin Cartel didn't disappear when he died in a police shootout in 1993. It mutated. Its associates - and their successors - became paramilitaries who fought guerrillas and continued trafficking drugs. They also reinforced existing criminal organisations. And they formed new ones.

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Graffiti criticising the military and paramilitary operations in Comuna 13 is common

Though Medellin's homicide rate is at one of its lowest points for three decades, the number of forced disappearances has increased, says Fernando Quijano, director of Corpades, an institute that monitors violence in the city.

To a visitor, though, Medellin now feels very safe. The transport system includes a state-of-the-art metro system, and cable cars. There are tech hubs, museums, dozens of new schools, and also library parks. Comuna 13 is home to the Parque Biblioteca San Javier - a vast, airy multi-level, multi-purpose building. It is a place for study, cultural events, and education - a meeting point for the community.

The transformation of the city has been called the "Medellin Miracle", and there is much pride at what has been achieved. At the heart of the urban philosophy is the aim of including the excluded, a desire to bring governance to districts like Comuna 13, and connect people to the city.

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Cable cars now connect hilly areas of Medellin that used to be hard to get to Covered escalators also make the hilltops of Comuna 13 easier to reach

"People come to Medellin to see those buildings that we defined and created," says Sergio Fajardo, who was mayor of the city when it underwent much of this transformation, and is now governor of the larger Antioquia region.

"Those buildings gave our people hope that things could happen, that elegant things could happen, and that the most beautiful places could be where they lived. That's a message of dignity, and it's powerful."

The Parque Biblioteca San Javier is one of the new developments

Yet, despite these improvements, la escombrera with its secrets still concealed, looms over Medellin. And, as Fajardo says, there are "many escrombreras" throughout Colombia.

Over nearly six decades, almost a quarter of a million people have been killed in the country's civil

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conflict - the majority of them civilians. In Medellin, numerous people have a story of violence and loss.

At the city's Parque de la Vida ("park of life") building, part of the University of Antioquia, a group of women have gathered weekly for the last seven years. They meet and they sew. The women make dolls. And each of the figures represents a loved-one killed or disappeared.

Maria Lucely Durango has stitched her son, a 17-year-old murdered in 2011 when he crossed the invisible line in his neighbourhood that marked rival gang territory. She has dressed Juan Felipe Henao Durango in a graduation gown - the representation of a son who would never fulfil his promise.

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Joining the sewing circle has been valuable therapy for the women, and helped them accept their bereavements. Often their stories are a demonstration of how cruelly indiscriminate the violence of Colombia's civil conflict has been: one mother lost a son to left-wing guerrillas, and a son and a daughter to the paramilitaries - the armed groups acting in opposition to those guerrillas. But most of the women who attend the group lost their loved-ones in paramilitary operations.

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So will the families of the disappeared of la escombrera see their loved-ones disinterred? Three areas for excavation have so far been identified by Movil 8.

"In areas one and two, we're recommending that the excavation goes ahead," says the engineer who has been assessing the site, Gabriel Jaime Cardon Londono.

"In area three, we don't think it would be safe because it would mean digging down a lot deeper - about 25m. Any kind of movement of the earth here would be much more dangerous."

There are not only physical challenges. The cost could be prohibitive - $4m or $5m according to an estimate made in 2010.

"We hope it will be possible to reduce that figure," says Jorge Mejia Martinez. "But whatever the cost, the decision of the mayor's office is to unearth the truth that is hidden here."

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The stone reads: To the victims of forced disappearance of Comuna 13 of Medellin at the hands of the Bloque Cacique Nutibara [paramilitaries]. So we don't forget them.

For Jenny Pearce la escombrera is illustrative of how Colombia has experienced violence over many decades.

"It's emblematic of impunity, of the lack of a rule of law that says to people you can't murder someone, throw them on to a rubbish tip and get away with it. La escombrera shows the layers and layers of violence from all armed groups going back decades. There are people who want to show the city's overcome its worst decades - of course, Medellin wants to move on. But until the past is addressed, and there's security that people can trust, that's difficult."

Margarita Selene Restrepo lives at one of the highest points of Comuna 13. It is a very steep climb. But it has been made easier in part by another Medellin innovation - an escalator that has replaced 350 of the steps that rise almost vertically. Now, that part of the journey to Margarita's home takes just four minutes, compared to the hour it might have taken before. She is not impressed. For Margarita, investment in the city's infrastructure highlights the lack of commitment to victims like her.

"If the government cared about us, they would have done something about la escombrera," she says.

If the exhumation goes ahead, there is at least a chance Margarita will find out what happened to her daughter that day in October 2002.

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The New Year tradition with a dark history

31December2014

bbc.com

New Year's Day concert, Vienna, 1 January 2013

The New Year's Day concert of classical music in Vienna has become an annual tradition - but it's not as old as some expect and there is a dark side to its history.

Twinkling chandeliers hang over the Graben, the avenue that has been Vienna's main shopping street since the 12th Century.

Halfway down, an ornate, baroque, marble and gold column stands in memorial to those who died in the virulent plagues of the 17th Century. Temporary stalls have been set up around the monument, selling mulled wine and sweet cakes.

They are staffed by volunteers from local Lions clubs, that international organisation dedicated to community work. By day, presumably lawyers, accountants, thoroughly modern business people.

But while the men wear warm quilted jackets, the women are in red and white dirndls, the national dress of old Austria.

History is all around here, much more so than in the other capitals of old Europe.

The civic architecture speaks of a city running a vast empire. The grand palaces that are now hotels and shopping arcades were once the townhouses of a noble and rich aristocracy.

The power may have gone but the past is ever present - in cafes that have been serving coffee since Mozart lived here, at the Spanish Riding School - where once young army officers practiced dressage, at the dancing academies preparing the city's youth for the annual ball season.

A horse from the Spanish Riding School at a performance in the Netherlands

You could be forgiven for assuming that the Vienna Philharmonic New Year's Day concert is also part of this roll-call of tradition.

The annual performance of waltzes, polkas and marches by Johann Strauss, his three sons and their contemporaries, seems timeless.

Everything about the event, from its formality, its charmingly contrived humour, its home in the almost overpoweringly rich Golden Hall of the Musikverein, suggest something that dates back to the heady days of the 19th Century.

In fact the history of the New Year's Day concert is rather more recent. It was a Nazi invention.

The first ever performance took place on New Year's Eve 1939, raising money for the Winterhilfswerk, an annual fundraising drive masterminded by the National Socialist Party to buy fuel for the needy in the coldest months of the year.

When the Strausses were alive, the Vienna Philharmonic was a little sniffy about their music. Why would such an advanced and adventurous orchestra want to play popular tunes?

They started taking it more seriously in the late 1920s - but the idea of a seasonal Strauss gala really gained traction when the Nazi party's cultural commissars hit upon the idea of a unifying event that could be broadcast live across the Third Reich. The concert moved to New Year's Day in 1941.

The Strauss family

Johann Strauss the Younger

- Johann Strauss the Elder was born in Vienna in 1804 - the son of an innkeeper he was one of the architects of the Viennese Waltz and three of his sons became musicians
- Johann Strauss the Younger (right), born in 1825, is the most famous member of the family, known as The Waltz King
- Josef Strauss, born in 1827, was an architectural draughtsman and foreman who designed a horse-drawn revolving-brush street-sweeping vehicle before he turned to music - he left more than 300 original dances and marches
- Eduard Strauss, born in 1835, was in the diplomatic service before joining his brothers as a conductor - he wrote more than 320 pieces of music

Source: The Johann Strauss Society of Great Britain

As it became obvious the war was not going to be over quickly, the Blue Danube Waltz and Fledermaus overture were seen as a helpful way of shoring up flagging morale.

When it emerged that Strauss had some Jewish ancestry, the Nazi propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels himself ensured the news was hushed up.

When the war ended, not a beat was missed - the concerts simply continued, their awkward history quietly forgotten.

As recently as the 1960s the Vienna Philharmonic saluted a wartime supporter - Baldur von Schirach, the Nazi gauleiter, or governor, of Vienna who deported tens of thousands of Jews.

Baldur von Schirach (right) with Hermann Goering wearing Tyrolean costume, circa 1935

He was awarded the orchestra's prestigious ring of honour in 1942. Staggeringly, after the medal was lost, he was given a replacement when he was released from Spandau Prison more than 20 years later.

Baldur von Schirach (right) with Hermann Goering wearing Tyrolean costume, circa 1935

That fact emerged after independent historians were allowed access to the Vienna Philharmonic's vast archive and their often shocking reports on its attitude during and after the war have now been published on the orchestra's own website.

Since then, the orchestra has revoked awards it made to six leading Nazis including von Schirach.

Baldur Von Schirach after his release from Spandau Prison, pictured with his son

Baldur Von Schirach after his release from Spandau Prison, pictured with his son

Today demand for tickets means there are now three New Year concerts - each one with the same programme.

New Year's Day itself is the grandest - seats cost up to €1,100 (£860, $1,340) but without doubt many in the audience will have paid agents and brokers far more.

On New Year's Eve it's a more Viennese crowd, reflected by the foyer crush of men in thick green Loden coats, and women in heavy furs.

And at this season's first performance on 30 December, the guests of honour were once again the Austrian military, who filled the balcony.

Some of the young soldiers, with their drab olive uniforms and brutally short haircuts, looked a little confused as to why they were there - their officers appearing more comfortable, perhaps contemplating a morning of popular music, followed by a decent lunch in the mess.

They are members of a modern European army, which plays a major role in international peacekeeping operations.

Yet looking up at the martial sea of green and grey, set against the rich gilt of the Golden Hall, it's hard to completely forget the dark history of this now global event.

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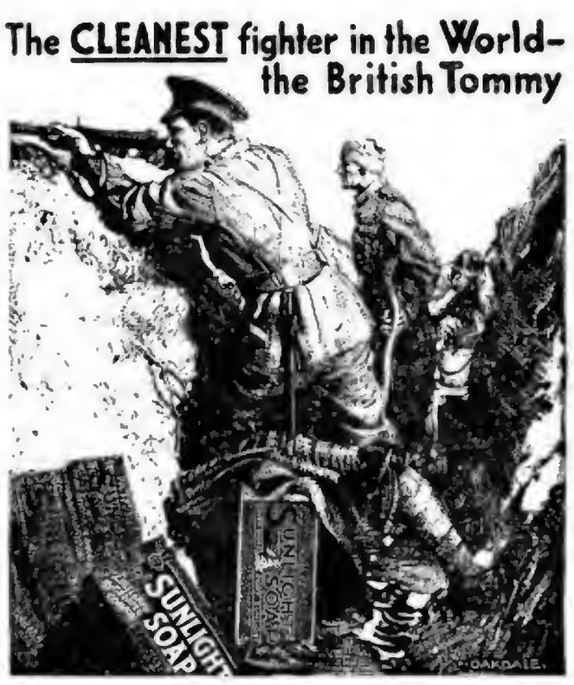
How firms cashed in on WW1

9 December 2014

bbc.com



Sunlight soap ad

Amid the bloodshed and brutality, companies were quick to cash in on the marketing opportunities provided by World War One. Jingoism, anti-German sentiment and guilt were all laid on thick to sell everything from food and fashion to fountain pens.

"The cleanest fighter in the world - the British Tommy," proclaimed the strap line for Sunlight Soap.

Patriotically beating the drum for the "clean, chivalrous fighting instincts of our gallant soldiers", it was one of a large number of adverts that drew directly on WW1 in a bid to boost sales.

In an age before TV bombarded consumers with commercials, newspapers and magazines such as Punch and the Illustrated London News were the battleground for firms desperate to see off their rivals.

The clean, chivalrous fighting instincts of our gallant soldiers reflect the ideals of our business life. The same characteristics which stamp the British Tommy as the *CLEANEST FIGHTER IN THE WORLD* have won equal repute for British Goods.

SUNLIGHT SOAP

is typically British. It is acknowledged by experts to represent the highest standard of Soap Quality and Efficiency. Tommy welcomes it in the trenches just as you welcome it at home.

£1,000 GUARANTEE OF PURITY ON EVERY BAR.

The name Lever on Soap is a Guarantee of Purity and Excellence.

LEVER BROTHERS LIMITED, PORT SUNLIGHT.

BODLEIAN LIBRARY PUBLISHING

Sunlight Soap ad text

But just how did they pitch their wares to the public and the men enlisted in the armed forces?

"The military outfitters had a good idea of what was coming," says Andrew McCarthy, co-author of The Huns Have Got My Gramophone!, which features many of the most striking advertisements. "They got in very quickly with ads to supply kit, although the notion of selling directly to soldiers nowadays is astonishing to many people."

WW1 recruitment posters

From 1914, Aquascutum, Burberry and Thresher & Glenny all punted versions of waterproof clothing to Army officers.

Slick slogans and eye-catching illustrations also tugged at the heartstrings of families desperately hoping their relatives would survive terrifying stints on the front line.

"A universal refrain was 'send a tin to your soldier friend'," says McCarthy. "Companies often played on people's fears." A Turnbull & Asser advert urged people to "save the lives of our men by sending them the anti-live barbed-wire glove" which was "completely insulated against electricity".

There were no areas, it seems, that could not be targeted.

Ads for revolvers were not unusual while another for a "trench bayonet", which appeared in Land and Water magazine in November 1915, is particularly brutal, says McCarthy. "It appears to be a handle with a knuckle-guard and a large spike added. It is hard to imagine a similar advertisement appearing in 2014," he says.

Anti-live barbed-wire glove advert

Barbed wire was a frequent problem for soldiers, but it was rarely electrified

Waterman's Ideal Fountain Pen ad

It is unclear how many soldiers actually used fountain pens in the trenches. Many wrote home with pencil

Bovril was sold as being "invaluable, both to those at the Front and those at home"

Far from being a humble hot drink, Bovril gave soldiers the "strength to win" thanks to being a "bodybuilder of astonishing power".

And, with five million letters sent from foreign lands each week, pen manufacturers battled for business too. Each emphasised attributes such as their product's trustworthiness and reliability for "the man who is fighting out yonder".

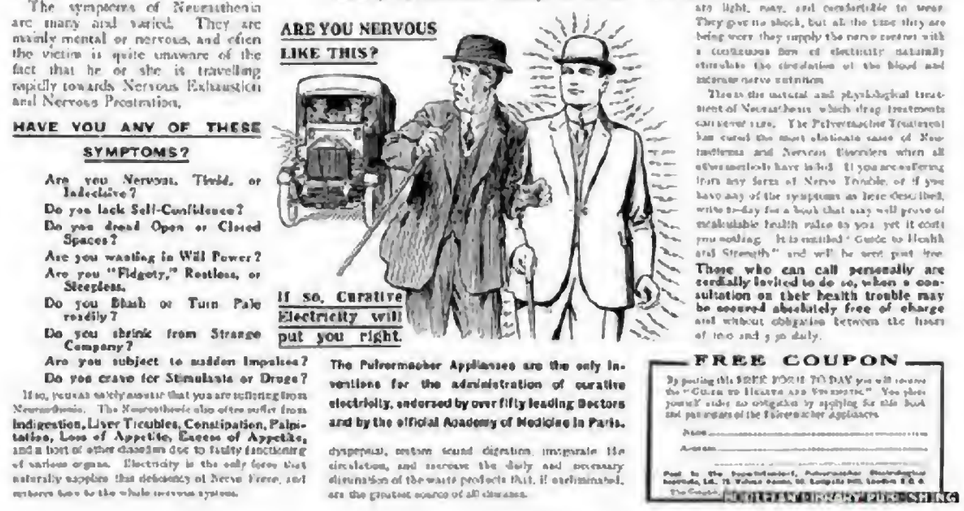
Bovril advert

Even bottled water took on added significance. Playing on nationalistic sentiment, in February 1915 Perrier asked "Do You Drink German Waters?". It went on to state: "Perrier stands as the great representative of France against a host of waters from Germany."

Stranger still were the medical ads that offered electric shock treatment to "cure" neurasthenia - a term encompassing a range of nervous complaints including shell shock.

"A lot of the health-related ones were exploitative," says McCarthy. "The products didn't really cure very much."

Although such claims would be reined in from the 1920s onwards with the advent of the National Vigilance Committee, firms advertising during WW1 faced few restrictions.


NEURASTHENIA CURED BY ELECTRICITY.

WONDERFUL CURES OF NERVE WEAKNESS, DEBILITY, AND NERVOUS DYSPEPSIA.

TO-DAY, war-time conditions are causing a serious increase in Neurasthenia and other nervous and Functional disorders.

The symptoms of Neurasthenia are many and varied. They are mainly mental or nervous, and often the victim is quite unaware of the fact that he or she is travelling rapidly towards Nervous Exhaustion and Nervous Prostration.

HAVE YOU ANY OF THESE SYMPTOMS?

Are you Nervous, Timid, or Indecisive?
Do you lack Self-Confidence?
Do you dread Open or Closed Spaces?
Are you wanting in Will Power?
Are you "Fidgety," Restless, or Sleepless.
Do you Blush or Turn Pale readily?
Do you shrink from Strange Company?
Are you subject to sudden Impulses?
Do you crave for Stimulants or Drugs?

If so, rest assured that you are suffering from Neurasthenia. The Neurasthenic also often suffer from Indigestion, Liver Troubles, Constipation, Palpitation, Loss of Appetite, Excess of Appetite, and a host of other disorders due to faulty functioning of various organs. Electricity is the only force that naturally supplies that deficiency of Nerve Force, and restores tone to the whole nervous system.

The greatest neurologists, including Erb, Beard, Loeb, and hundreds of the foremost medical thinkers, now agree that electrical treatment, skilfully and scientifically directed, will revitalise depleted nerve centres (as in neurasthenia, debility, and nervous dyspepsia), restore sound digestion, invigorate the circulation, and increase the daily and necessary elimination of the waste products that, if undiminished, are the greatest source of all diseases.

ARE YOU NERVOUS LIKE THIS?

If so, Curative Electricity will put you right.

The Pulvermacher Appliances are the only inventions for the administration of curative electricity, endorsed by over fifty leading Doctors and by the official Academy of Medicine in Paris.

To-day you can be CURED IN YOUR OWN HOME BY ELECTRICITY

by simply wearing the Pulvermacher appliances, which are light, easy, and comfortable to wear. They give no shock, but all the time they are being worn they supply the nerve centres with a continuous flow of electricity naturally stimulate the circulation of the blood and increase nerve nutrition.

This is the natural and physiological treatment of Neurasthenia which drug treatments can never give. The Pulvermacher Treatment has cured the most obstinate cases of Neurasthenia and Nervous Disorders when all other methods have failed. If you are suffering from any form of Nerve Trouble, or if you have any of the symptoms as here described, write to-day for a book that may well prove of incalculable health value to you, yet it costs you nothing. It is entitled "Guide to Health and Strength" and will be sent post free.

Those who can call personally are cordially invited to do so, when a consultation on their health trouble may be secured absolutely free of charge and without obligation between the hours of 10.00 and 5.30 daily.

FREE COUPON

By posting this FREE COUPON TO-DAY you will receive the "GUIDE TO HEALTH AND STRENGTH." You place yourself under no obligation by applying for this book and particulars of the Pulvermacher appliances.

Name .....

Address .....

Post to the Pulvermacher Electrotherapeutic Institute, Ltd., 78 Pulvermacher Buildings, 84 Lambeth Hill, London E.C.4.

The Original and Only Genuine Pulvermacher Appliances.

BODLEIAN LIBRARY PUBLISHING

Neurasthenia Cured by Electricity advert

This ad, which claimed the use of electricity could cure disorders including shell shock, appeared in 1918

Do You Drink German Waters?

APOLLINARIS comes from GERMANY.
PERRIER comes from FRANCE.

The Battle Cry of the Allies:
"Shoulder to Shoulder, in War and Trade."

Perrier

Perrier Water ad

People were encouraged not to consume products with German origins, as this Perrier ad demonstrates

For Huns co-author Amanda-Jane Doran, a former archivist at Punch, the range of ads give a sense of "everyday life". "You get a real idea of what was happening, which I don't think you get in the same way from newspapers and history books about the battles.

"You can see how people spoke to each other. They're very jingoistic, they're overtly anti-German, but they show the feelings of the time. The ones I found most touching were for things like guard dogs because women were on their own and vulnerable."

Helped by advances in print technology, ads had become more and more creative visually.

"It's amazing how targeted they were and the illustrations were beautiful," says Doran. "Artists started doing work for ad companies as well as book publishers and, as photography was still the preserve of the rich, illustrations and graphics were the art most people saw."

This advert from Punch, printed in December 1915, mocks the number of must-have items sold to soldiers

THIS IS NOT AN A.S.C. MAN GUARDING STORES. IT IS MERELY AN AVERAGE INFANTRYMAN WITH THE ORDINARY ALLOWANCE OF COMMODITIES, IF WE ARE TO BELIEVE THE ADVERTISERS' ACCOUNT OF WHAT IS INDISPENSABLE.

BODLEIAN LIBRARY PUBLISHING

Infantryman surrounded by 'essential' goods

"The cussed Huns have got my gramophone"

Another Love Made Good.

THE "Decca" is the ideal gramophone for Active Service. It can be carried with ease anywhere. No case required; no loose parts to get lost. Plays perfectly all makes and sizes of needle records.

DECCA
THE PORTABLE GRAMOPHONE

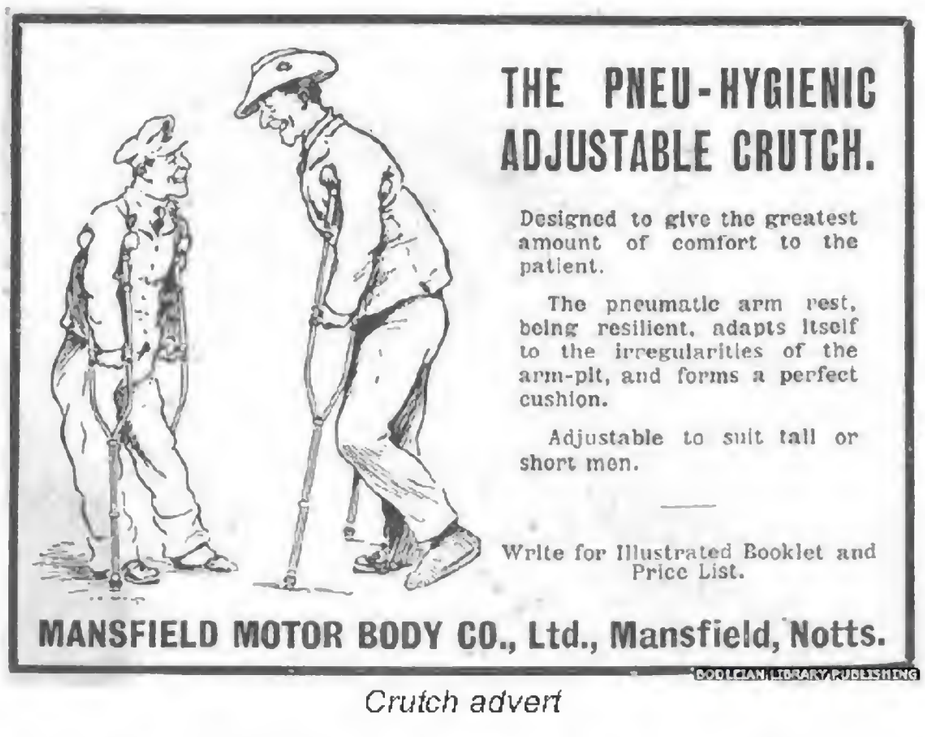
THE DULCEPHONE CO., 36, WORSHIP ST., LONDON, E.C. 2.

Huns have got my gramophone ad

This ad refers to a soldier whose gramophone - a source of joy in the trenches - was taken by "the cussed Huns"

"World War One came along at a useful time for the industry in many respects. It was coming of age," says advertising historian Dr David Clampin, a senior lecturer at Liverpool John Moores University,

How companies used language and imagery was acceptable despite sometimes appearing "tasteless" by today's standards, says Clampin. "Advertisers can map the narrative of a war into their products. With things like Sunlight Soap they're saying 'We're clean fighters both morally and literally'.



Crutch advert

Despite their injuries, this advert for crutches shows two soldiers being far from glum

"You see an upsurge in adverts for prosthetics. From a modern perspective, you may view it as tasteless. But the nature of a capitalist society is the need to sell goods. Businesses make money out of war.

"You can see it again during World War Two and even today, with Sainsbury's Christmas advert which plays on the 1914 Christmas truce and game of football in no man's land.

"The trust in brands developed during WW1. People generally accepted what they were seeing."

McCarthy agrees. "There were lots of things in Punch referring to profiteers. But you have to try to keep a company going.

"There's no point in thinking 'there's a war, let's roll over and give up'."

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Bearded Lady Blamed for Bringing Floods to the Balkans - Who Forted? Magazine

By Ken Summers on May 28, 2014

whofortedblog.com

conchita_serbia_flood

Earlier this month, what has been called the worst flooding in more than a century struck parts of Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia. More than 150,000 residents were forced to flee their homes; the death toll is estimated to be at least 50 people. But who's to blame for so much horror? If you ask the church leaders, it's none other than this year's *Eurovision* winner Conchita Wurst, an Austrian female impersonator.

According to Patriarch Amfilohije, head of the Orthodox Church of Montenegro, "This is not a coincidence, but a warning. God sent the rains as a reminder that people should not join the wild side." Aside from paraphrasing lyrics from Lou Reed, Amfilohiije and other church leaders view Wurst's appearance as "Jesus-like… abomination" in an Antichrist sense and her winning *Eurovision* was a call for "divine punishment". "God is thus washing Serbia of its sins," Patriarch Irinej added, presumably for any of its citizens who dared to place a vote for the drag queen.

Nature strikes back against lip-syncing at Topčić Polje in Bosnia.

Born Tom Neuwirth, Conchita gained global attention for her song 'Rise Like a Phoenix' which earned her the crown at *Eurovision*. But not all religious leaders take such a dim view of her. Austria's Roman Catholic Cardinal Christoph Schönborn recently praised Wurst as part of the "multicolored variety in God's garden."

Drag performer Conchita Wurst, destroyer of worlds.

If there's ever a reason for natural disasters, surely it's drag queens. All that sass can be very dangerous. For all we know, the biblical flood was caused by one of Noah's sons' alter egos: *Eva Destruction*.

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The beast of Bodmin? It was just a harmless little cat according to new files

mirror.co.uk

Theories have ranged from panthers to pumas and even a dark leopard.

The so-called Beast of Bodmin Moor has sparked a string of stories for three decades with mystery surrounding just what was stalking Cornwall and slaying livestock.

And despite no concrete evidence of its existence ever being discovered, it remains one of Britain's most feared animals.

But now newly-found records have revealed that far from being the feared creature of folklore, the much talked about terroriser of farmers is in fact a 12-inch CAT.

A six-month Government investigation in 1995 into the Cornish enigma found there was no "verifiable evidence" of exotic cats loose in the UK, reports the Daily Mail.

YouTube

Spotted: One of many supposed sightings of the Beast of Bodmin Moor

And experts found the 'beast' was a black cat about 12ins tall after spending the equivalent of £84,000 examining photos and videos, and staging recontructions.

Sheffield Hallam University journalism professor David Clarke found the findings in a file at the Public Record Office.

The report by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food detailed at least 60 reported sightings of the 'beast' going back to 1983.

And despite ruling that it was an ordinary pet, researchers were unable to prove that big cats were 'not present'.

Not long after the report was published, a skull with large fangs was found in the River Fowey near the moor by a teenage boy.

The Natural History Museum in London said it was the skull of a male leopard.

In 2012, a horrified dog walker found the gruesome remains of a terrifying beast near to a popular Scottish beauty spot.

Horrifying: The rotting remains of what appears to be a big cat were found near to a Scottish beauty spot

YouTube

John Robertson, 50, was walking along a rural path in Cullen, Morayshire, with wife Pauline when they came across the body of a giant cat.

Mr Robertson, from Drybridge, Morayshire said: “I was walking my two dogs on Monday morning when we came across all these dead birds scattered about everywhere.

“I couldn't believe my eyes. I have never seen so many dead birds in one area. They were completely mauled, they had their guts totally ripped out of them lying on the ground.

“Then a little further on we came across a horrible rotting smell which was this big cat.

“It looks like it's feasted on the seagulls and maybe it has fallen down the cliff nearby, injured itself and just lay there till it died.”

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Belle Grove

Belle Grove Plantation 13.jpg
Front (River facade) of Belle Grove in 1938

Location	White Castle, Louisiana vicinity
Coordinates	30.177°N 91.154°W
Built	1852–1857[1]
Demolished	1952
Architectural style(s)	Greek Revival and Italianate
Governing body	Private

Belle Grove, also known as **Belle Grove Plantation**, was a plantation and elaborate Greek Revival and Italianate-style plantation mansion near White Castle in Iberville Parish, Louisiana. Completed in 1857, it was one of the largest mansions ever built in the South, surpassing that of the neighboring Nottoway. Nottoway is often cited as the largest antebellum plantation house remaining in the South.[1][2] The masonry structure stood 62 feet (19 m) high and measured 122 feet (37 m) wide by 119 feet (36 m) deep, with seventy-five rooms (including a jail cell) spread over four floors.[1]

- 1 History
- 2 See also
- 3 References
- 4 External links

History

Belle Grove was owned by John Andrews, a wealthy sugar planter originally from Virginia.[3] Andrews owned over 7,000 acres (2,800 ha) spread over several plantations, with Belle Grove having 3⁄4 mile (1.2 km) of river frontage. He founded Belle Grove during the 1830s, with Dr. John Phillip Read Stone as a partner. Andrews assumed full ownership in 1844, when the partnership was dissolved. By the 1850s, his more than 150 slaves were producing over half a million pounds of sugar each year.[1]

Andrews built the mansion from 1852 to 1857 at a cost of $80,000, not including the free (slave) labor or the plentiful cypress lumber and hand-made bricks produced on the plantation. The house was designed by New Orleans architect Henry Howard.[1][4] Andrews had a legendary rivalry with the owner of Nottoway Plantation, John Randolph. This competition even extended to their mansions, with both massive structures designed by Howard in a mix of the Greek Revival and Italianate styles.[1]

Following the American Civil War and ensuing collapse of the plantation economy, Andrews sold the home and plantation in 1867 to James Ware, for the meager sum of $50,000.[1] The Ware family

continued to live and farm the plantation until the early 1920s. After several bad crop years, they were forced to sell the home. From 1925 onwards the house sat vacant.[1]

The post-War era at Belle Grove saw the finely crafted home rot away in Louisiana's harsh environment. Neglect allowed a leaky roof to expand and destroy one wing of the mansion. Several owners purchased the home, each with aspirations of restoration, but none had the means necessary in the lean years of the Great Depression and World War II to stop the onslaught of rapid decay. On March 17, 1952, a mysterious fire during the night destroyed what remained of the house.[2]

Dozens of books have been written regarding Belle Grove's beauty and charm, while hundreds of photographs have been published illustrating those narratives.[2] During the late 1930s a comprehensive set of photographs and architectural drawings were produced for the Historic American Buildings Survey. This material, an inventory of the house's contents made on the death of James A. Ware in 1908, and a drawing of the missing wing, are all available on the website of the Library of Congress.

Famous photographer Clarence John Laughlin described Belle Grove in his work, *Ghosts Along the Mississippi*:

> When completed, its tremendous mass rose on huge brick foundation arches over twelve feet above the surrounding earth, its walls and mantels were plastered and carved by the most expert European craftsmen money could secure, its great flight of brick steps was covered with imported marble, its door knobs and keyhole guards were of silver, its pillars bore Corinthian capitals six feet high but of the utmost refinement. Its theatrical magnificence would have delighted the Bibiena family - seventeenth century designers of the most elaborate and grandiose stage sets for kings. Yet it was not heavy, or pompous. It managed somehow, to combine vastness with delicacy; titanic proportions with grace and warmth....[2]

1. ^ Jump up to: ***a b c d e f g h*** Matrana, Marc R. (2009). *Lost Plantations of the South*. Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi. pp. 184–192. ISBN 978-1-57806-942-2.
2. ^ Jump up to: ***a b c d*** Friends of Belle Grove Plantation of Louisiana Website
3. **Jump up ^** Federal Writers' Project (1947). *Louisiana: A Guide to the State*. p. 549. ISBN 978-1-60354-017-9.
4. **Jump up ^** Sternberg, Mary Ann (2001). *Along the River Road: Past and Present on Louisiana's Historic Byway*. LSU Press. p. 256. ISBN 978-0-8071-2731-5.

- Media related to Belle Grove Plantation (Iberville Parish, Louisiana) at Wikimedia Commons
- Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) No. LA-36, "Belle Grove, White Castle, Iberville Parish, LA", 21 photos, 36 measured drawings, 23 data pages, supplemental material
- Friends of Belle Grove Plantation of Louisiana Website

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Bible possibly used in woman's slaying

Henry K. Lee
Updated 10:10 pm, Thursday, July 19, 2012

sfgate.com

A woman smothered a romantic rival with a pillow and beat her - possibly with a Bible - while chanting religious passages as part of what she called an exorcism, a prosecutor said Thursday.

Karla Kuhl, 35, of El Sobrante has been charged with murdering 58-year-old Patricia Medeiros, said Contra Costa County prosecutor Harold Jewett.

Sheriff's deputies responding to an early morning medical call on June 5 found Medeiros dead in her home on the 6000 block of North Arlington Boulevard near Richmond.

An autopsy determined that Medeiros died of blunt trauma and asphyxiation. Kuhl and Medeiros had been involved with the same man "at one point or another," Jewett said. "Whether it was ongoing between both of them and that man at the time is open to some question."

Kuhl used a pillow to smother Medeiros on a couch and used a book - possibly a Bible - to beat her, the prosecutor said.

"She was chanting Biblical passages at the time of the attack," Jewett said, referring to the woman's statement to investigators.

"I'm not prepared to speculate on exactly what her motivations were for doing what she did. I think it's complex," the prosecutor said. "I know what she said, and what she said included performing an exorcism."

Kuhl is being held at the West County Detention Facility in Richmond in lieu of $1 million bail. She is to appear in Superior Court on Wednesday.

Henry K. Lee is a San Francisco Chronicle staff writer. E-mail: hlee@sfchronicle.com Twitter: @henryklee

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On Ocracoke Island lies a spot known as Teach's Hole. This small inlet is reported to be the spot where the pirate Edward Teach, better known as Blackbeard, preferred to anchor his ship. It's also said to be where he met his end, and some say his ghost haunts the spot to this day.

Blackbeard roamed the Atlantic from around 1716 until 1718, robbing ships from the West Indies to the Carolinas. He had a reputation for unbridled ferocity. When Blackbeard went into battle, he strapped multiple pistols and multiple cutlasses to his body. Most frightening of all, he wove fuses into his long, black beard and set them on fire just before he stepped on to the captured ship. This towering figure, armed to the teeth, with a sparking, flaming beard must have been absolutely terrifying. Ships' captains would surrender without a shot being fired.

Blackbeard's reign on the high seas came to an end on November 22, 1718. Virginia Governor Alexander Spotswood sent a ship commanded by John Maynard down to the North Carolina coast to track down and kill Blackbeard. Maynard surprised Blackbeard and a skeleton crew anchored at Teach's Hole. In the ferocious battle he followed, Blackbeard was shot five times and stabbed no less than twenty. The pirate crew was all killed or captures.

Blackbeard's head was chopped off and hung from the bowsprit of Maynard's ship. His headless body was thrown overboard. Legend has it that the headless body swam around Maynard's ship three times before sinking below the waters.

Ever since then, it's been said that Blackbeard's ghost haunts the spot known as Teach's Hole. Many people have reported seeing a strange light moving beneath the water in the cove. It's said that this is Blackbeard's spirit, swimming through the waters, searching for his missing head.

What's more, on stormy nights it's said that you can hear Blackbeard's voice calling out in the wind. Many people have heard a horrible roaring coming from the wind on dark and stormy nights in Teach's Cove, a roaring that sounds like someone bellowing "Where's my head?"

A note About Pirates

The accounts of Blackbeard's viciousness may be a fact of history being written by the winners. Except for the final battle, there's no record of Blackbeard ever having killed anyone. The show with the massive arsenal and flaming beard may have been deliberately designed to avoid a fight.

It's also hard not to sympathize with the pirates over the British Navy. Pirate crews were better treated and better paid that Navy crews. Furthermore, pirate crews were on their ships by choice, as opposed to the Navy crews, many of whose members would have been pressed into service.

Pirate ships were also essentially democratic institutions. The pirate captain would be elected by the crew, and his orders were absolute only during battle.

In the big picture, morality also seems to have been more on the side of the pirates than the navy. A large portion of the cargoes passing through the Atlantic at this time were holding enslaved human beings as cargo. When intercepting a slave ship, pirate crews would routinely free those destined for a life of unimaginable misery and offer them the opportunity to join the ship's crew. Records show that as much of half of any pirate ship's crew in the early Eighteenth Century would have been composed of freed Africans. Blackbeard's trusted second-in-command was one of these men, known as Black Caesar.

While many pirates did kill and plunder, they were killing and plundering from people who were themselves killing, plundering, enslaving, and exploiting lands which had been invaded and were held by force. Indeed, what seemed to offend the authorities so much about the pirates was not their tactics, but that the ordinary seagoing joe was getting cut of the action.

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Eagle Nest Mountain stands at the southern edge of the Balsam mountain range and was once home to the luxurious Eagle Nest Hotel, built in 1900 by a Mr. S.C. Satterthwait of Waynesville. Guests at the hotel soon began to hear the story of a strange creature who lived in the area. The thing was not quite a man and not quite an animal — it stood about eight feet tall and every inch of its body was covered with shaggy grey hair, except for its human face. The creature was named Boojum, and he seemed to be harmless enough, but he did have two all-too human habits.

The first of these was the Boojum was greedy and he loved to hoard gems. Rubies and emeralds are found naturally throughout the mountains of North Carolina, and Boojum loved to hunt for these pretty, precious stones and hide them away in his own treasure hoards. Being a thrifty mountain type, he would scoop up the discarded liquor jugs thrown away by tourists and fill these with his gems. He would then bury them in one of the secret caves on the mountain that only he knew the whereabouts of.

Boojum's second habit that made him a little more man than animal was that he loved to look at pretty girls. Back in those days, a young woman who wanted to have a bath might head off into the woods to find a secluded bond at the base of a waterfall. There, safe from human eyes, she could strip down to her naturalness and go about getting herself clean. But Boojum seemed to have some kind of sense about what was going on, and a young woman enjoying herself in the water would often hear a rustle in the bushes and look up to see his hairy face peering down at her.

Now, most of these girls would quickly gather up their clothes and run off back home as soon as they saw him. But one young woman named Annie was braver than most, and one day when she was bathing in a stream deep in the balsam groves on Eagle Nest, she looked up and saw Boojum staring down at her. But Annie didn't run, in fact, she looked into Boojum's sorrowful eyes and saw that above all else he was just another lonely soul living on the mountain. Annie fell in love with those sad eyes, and she fell in love with Boojum, and she left her home and her family to go and live with Boojum deep in the mountain woods as his wife.

As much as Boojum loved Annie, and as much as Annie loved Boojum, Boojum still hung on to his love of jewels. On certain nights, he would leave his bride alone and go searching for jewels on the mountain. Annie, growing lonely, would go out in search of Boojum, and she developed a peculiar holler, something that sounded like a cross between a monkey and a hooting owl, that she would use to call out to Boojum. Boojum would use the same cry to call back to her, and eventually the two calls would come closer together until they came together on the hills.

Annie and Boojum calling to each other was often heard by guests at the Eagle Nest Hotel. Folklorist John Parris has said that Annie's owl-like holler was the source of the term "Hootenanny," which appeared in the language around the turn of the twentieth century and meant any kind of party or get-together. It was in the 1960s when the term was introduced to the wider public by Pete Seeger and Woodie Guthrie that it came to mean specifically a gathering of folk musicians.

That Annie's approach to encountering a giant shaggy beast was to marry him is testament to the well-known friendliness of North Carolinians. It may be that Annie and Boojum had children. for occasionally, even to this day, a shaggy, ape-like creature is seen in the balsam groves of Haywood County.

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Brown Mountain is a low ridge in Burke County that, during dry, crisp evenings in the autumn, is host to a genuine and baffling mystery. When conditions are right, mysterious glowing orbs can be seen to rise up off the mountain, hover and wobble about fifteen feet up in the air, and then disappear. There's no denying that the lights are real. They have been observed by countless witnesses and photographed on many occasions. But what they are is still unknown.

The Brown Mountain Lights have been observed for centuries, and multiple legends have arisen around the phenomenon. The Cherokee were aware of the lights, and according to some accounts claimed that the lights were the souls of Cherokee women searching for their men who had died in a great battle between the Cherokee and the Catawba that took place on Brown Mountain. Another legend says that the lights are the the ghostly echoes of lights that appeared during a search for a murdered woman in the 19th century.

But what was once the most widely known legend was recorded in song in the 1950s by the sweethearts of country music. Scott Wiseman and Myrtle Eleanor Cooper were both North Carolina natives, who sang recorded as Lulu Belle and Scotty from the 1920s until the 1950s. A married couple, the two performed together from 1935 until 1958 as regulars on the Chicago radio station's WLS-AM's *National Barn Dance* program. At the time, they were one of the biggest acts in country music.

The song *Brown Mountain Light*, penned by Wiseman, tells a version of the story where a man, accompanied by a slave, becomes lost while hunting on the mountain. The man is never found. The slave returns to the mountain every night with a lantern to hunt for him, carrying on this search even from beyond the grave.

Wiseman, who was from nearby Boone, said this version of the story is one he head from his uncle, who took him hunting and camping near Brown Mountain. The song rose to the top of the country charts and subsequently became the best-known version of the legend for a generation.

The legend of Brown Mountain recorded in the Lulu Belle and Scotty song is somewhat dated, particularly in regard to its unforgivable romanticizing of slavery. Indeed, it's easy to imagine a retelling of this story where the lights are from people looking for the slave who, when realizing he was alone on the mountain, seized his chance and hightailed it for Ohio and freedom.

As for the lights themselves, many different possible scientific explanations have been offered, from swamp gas to the reflections of automobile headlights from the valley below. But every explanation offered up so far seems to be too easily disproved. The lights have been observed since before automobiles existed, so headlights are hardly an explanation. The lights are even observed during the 1916 flood that shut down all automobile and railway traffic in the valley below. The swamp gas theory seems to bed crimped somewhat be the

distinct absence of a swamp on Brown Mountain.

Whatever their cause, people still flock to see the Brown Mountain Lights, but spotting them is never guaranteed. Reportedly, your best chance to see the lights comes in October and November, after all the leaves are off the trees.

Where to go to see the lights

Brown Mountain is located in the Pisgah National Forest, and there a few nearby overlooks commonly used to observe the lights.

- **Brown Mountain Overlook**, located 20 miles north of Morganton on NC highway 181, 1 mile south of the Barkhouse Picnic Area.
- **Wiseman's View Overlook** can be found 5 miles south of Linville Falls on Kistler Memorial Highway, which is also Old NC 105 and State Road 1238.
- **Lost Cove Cliffs Overlook**, which is found on the Blue Ridge Parkway, at mile-post 310, 2 miles north of the NC highway 181 junction.

The lights are most commonly seen on clear, dry nights in the autumn. Moonless nights can be a boon to visibility. The lights are a relatively rare occurrence, and many people have sat on a car hood late into the evening staring into the darkness and seeing nothing. But it's definitely worth a look.

On dry autumn evenings, pale, ghostly, blue globes of light can be seen rising off of Brown Mountain in the Pisgah National Forest

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October 7, 1959: The city council election in Sao Paulo, Brazil had a surprise winner — Cacareco, a five-year-old female rhinoceros at the local zoo. Not only did she win, but she did so by a landslide, gamering 100,000 votes (15% of the total). This was one of the highest totals for a local candidate in Brazil's history to that date.

Cacareco

Cacareco's candidacy was traced back to a group of students who had printed up 200,000 ballots with her name on them, but the ballots were all legitimately cast by voters, one of whom commented: "Better to elect a rhino than an ass."

Cacareco's election caused an outpouring of concern among Brazil's intellectual classes. One sociologist described it as "a phenomenon of the greatest sociological importance" and worried that it indicated Brazil was on the threshold of revolt. Others interpreted it as a protest against food shortages, the high cost of living, and political corruption. In fact, many voters in the same election had expressed their disgust with local politics by placing black beans in the ballot envelope instead of a ballot.

The director of the zoo commented that he would ask Sao Paulo to pay Cacareco's Councilman's salary. However, election officials nullified all her ballots and a new election was held the next week.

Rhino Takes Brazilian Election Victory With Aplomb

Cacareco learns of her victory

Cacareco died in 1962, but her memory lived on in a number of ways. "Voto Cacareco" became a widely used term signifying a protest vote. She also inspired the formation of the Rhinoceros Party of Canada, whose members appointed the rhinoceros Cornelius the First as their leader.

Cacareco wasn't the first animal elected to political office, not even in Brazil. In 1954 a goat named Smelly had been elected to the city council in Jaboatao. But due to the size of her victory, Cacareco remains the most famous animal candidate of all time.

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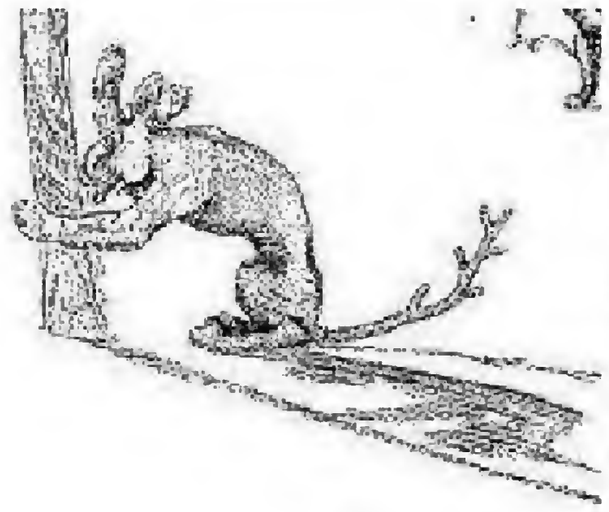

A depiction of the rumored "cactus cat"

The **Cactus cat** is a mythical creature that has been reported in the American Southwest. It's described as a bobcat-like animal with thorn-like fur, sharp bones protruding from its front legs, and a branched tail. The cactus cat has been sighted in the Southwestern desert, in states such as California and New Mexico.

Cowboys and pioneers of the nineteenth century reported these strange beasts coming out at night, slashing open cacti, and drinking the exposed sap. This caused the cats to enter a drunken state, stumbling around and rarely attacking travellers. The story of the cactus cat is probably fueled by numerous cases of misidentification, most likely being a bobcat or a mountain lion.

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Central American Whintosser

wikia.com

Central American Whintosser is an aggressive fearsome critter from lumberjack tales of North America in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This creature lived in the coast ranges of California, in the region of Isthmus. It is not a solitary creature, there are multiple Whintossers, sort of like a family or pack.

It has a triangular body with a neck and a short tail that can swivel around. The head and tail can spin around 100 times per minute. It isn't very big, but it has a big ego. It is extremely aggressive. It has three sets of legs which help it to stabilize itself during earthquakes which are frequent in the region. These legs are positioned all around its body enabling it to walk upside down, sideways and on the ground. The animal's fur is quite bristly and slants at a sharp angle.

This animal causes frequent trouble to men and is very difficult to kill (even if you shoot it, club it, or really do anything to it, it will just thrash around, spin, and scream). The only known way to kill the creature is to trap it in a flume pipe. In this pipe, the Whintosser will try to walk in all directions and tear itself apart.

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The Chained Oak is an Oak Tree, tied in chains, located near to the village of Alton in Staffordshire, England. The tree, referred to as "The Old Oak", is the subject of a local legend involving the Earl of Shrewsbury and an old beggar woman. The legend was adapted and fancifully elaborated to form the back-story for the ride "Hex" at the nearby Alton Towers theme park.

Legend

The legend goes that on an autumn night Earl of Shrewsbury was returning to his home at Alton Towers when an old woman suddenly appeared in the road. The coach stopped to find why she was there, and then the old woman begged for a coin. The Earl cruelly dismissed her, so the old woman placed a curse on him. The old woman said, "For every branch on the Old Oak Tree here that falls, a member of the Earl's family will die." The Earl dismissed this and carried on his way.

The same night a violent storm caused a single branch from the old oak tree to break and fall. Later that same night, a member of the Earl's family suddenly and mysteriously died. This version was adapted for the Alton Towers ride "Hex", with the ride depicting a bolt of lighting striking the tree and causing the branch to fall.

The Earl ordered his servants to chain every branch together to prevent other branches from falling. To this day the Oak tree remains chained up.

Variations

There are slight variations in the story, however the core remains the same.

- One version states it was an old man who cursed the earl, not a woman.[1]
- A second version is that instead of a storm bringing down a branch, the Earl's son was out riding the next day and, as he passed the old oak tree, the woman had been standing under a branch which fell on top of him, knocking him from his horse and killing him. This story is slightly more plausible, as there are records of a riding accident around that time.

On 9 April 2007, one of the tree's main branches fell off. The Talbot family confirmed that no one died when the branch fell.[2]

Since then, a considerable proportion of the chained oak has collapsed. It is thought that one of the chains, having become integral to the tree's structure, rusted through resulting in the collapse of part of the lower side of the tree.

Date and identity

Various dates are attributed to the legend of the chained oak, affecting the identity of "The Earl". The Talbot Family, Earls of Shrewsbury, began building nearby Alton Towers in 1801, on the site of the former "Alveton Lodge".[3] The new house they created was known at that

time known as "Alton Abbey" (despite no religious affiliations or history). The 15th Earl (died 1827) made the house their permanent home in 1814. His nephew and successor, the 16th Earl (died 1852) moved to the house in 1831, after the family's principal residence, Heythrop Park, burned down.[4] It was during the 16th Earl's residency the house became known as "Alton Towers".

The legend has various dates attributed. BBC Stoke and Staffordshire give date the legend as 1821,[1] which would identify the earl as Charles Talbot, 15th Earl of Shrewsbury. Alton Towers Heritage state the chaining occurred "around the 1840s", which would identify the earl as John Talbot, 16th Earl of Shrewsbury.[2]

The 16th Earl is remembered as "Good Earl John" for his charity, having supported local schools and churches, and financed the construction of new Catholic chapels around the Midlands, including in the village of Alton where he also built almshouses for the poor and elderly.[5] His reputation does not seem to fit that of the Earl in the legend.

Deaths

The legend states a member of the Earl's family (sometimes quoted as his son) suddenly died or was killed when riding.

The 16th Earl's only son died in infancy;[6] this does not fit with legend as it happened before John Talbot became Earl of Shrewsbury, and was not caused by a horse riding incident. The 16th Earl had 2 daughters, the youngest, Lady Gwendoline Catherine Talbot, died in 1840 aged only 22.[5] This fits with the legend's date range, but her death was not mysterious: she died of Scarlet fever in Rome.[5] Also 3 of Gwendoline's children died of measles shortly after their mother,[5] meaning the Earl had 4 deaths in his close family, not the single one described in the legend.

Rational explanations

The 15th and 16th Earls of Shrewsbury built and then extended Alton Towers and its gardens. During their tenure, thousands of new trees were planted, but the old trees were "greatly prized". The Chained Oak was situated in a highly visible" position, "just off a carriage-way" frequently used by the Earls. As such, the tree may have been wrapped in chains simply to preserve it, and prevent it from collapsing under its own weight.[2]

Location

The tree can be found in the woods near Alton Village, close to the entrance of the Alton Towers theme park. From the main entrance gates, head south towards the village, past the staff & service entrance on the left. Next on the right is a tall gate house, alongside the driveway to the eponymous Chained Oak B&B. Don't drive down this driveway, as the road is tight, there's no public parking and turning around in it is difficult. Instead, park in the layby opposite. To the left of the driveway is a gap in the stone wall, through which you'll find a well-worn pathway heading down the hill. The tree itself is about five minutes walk down this pathway, on the right with worn down steps leading up to it.

Trivia

- The ride Hex – the Legend of the Towers at the theme park Alton Towers is based on a fanciful elaboration of this legend.

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6. **Jump up ^** The Institute of Our Lady of Mercy. "John Talbot". Retrieved 25 October 2013.

External links

- BBC Article on the legend of the Chained Oak

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Chickens, fuel spill onto I-5 following 6-vehicle crash

columbian.com

Fifty to 60 chickens got loose on Interstate 5 on Monday afternoon following a six-vehicle collision on the North Fork Lewis River Bridge, just south of Woodland. Two people sustained minor injuries.

The crash, which was reported in the northbound lanes around 3:20 p.m., caused a 13-mile backup and slowed traffic for several hours. It involved a tractor-trailer, an armored truck, two sport utility vehicles, a pickup and a big rig without a trailer.

The collision occurred when the pickup truck, a black Ford F-150 driven by Mark W. Backstrom, 54, of Longview, changed lanes to avoid a vehicle stopped illegally in the left lane, according to a Washington State Patrol press memo. The pickup lost control, struck the inside rail of the bridge and came to a stop.

That's when the pickup was struck by a green 1995 Freightliner tractor that wasn't pulling a trailer.

The grey armored truck, a silver 2011 Ford escape and a black GMC Sierra slowed down to avoid the crash when a tractor-trailer hauling chickens, driven by 43-year-old Robert L. York of Toledo, hit all three of the vehicles that had slowed down, according to State Patrol.

The White 2001 Freightliner was hauling two trailers, which contained hundreds of chickens stored in pallet crates, said Tim Dawdy of Clark County Fire & Rescue. “Some of those broke open, so there's chickens on the freeway,” he said Monday afternoon.

Poultry handlers were deployed to the crash site to round up the chickens and transfer them to another tractor-trailer that had been sent to the bridge, Dawdy said.

Diesel spilled from two of the vehicles, so firefighters blocked the bridge drains to prevent fuel from flowing into the river. The vehicles were so intertwined that firefighters had trouble accessing the leaks, Dawdy said. The Washington State Department of Ecology was notified about the spill, and the state Department of Transportation was sent to help with traffic control.

York and the driver of the Escape, 62-year-old Portland resident Richard E. Miller, were injured, but they did not need to be transported to the hospital, according to State Patrol.

Backstrom, the pickup's driver, was cited for making an unsafe lane change, and York, who was hauling the chickens, was cited for following too close and speeding, according to State Patrol.

The vehicle that had stopped illegally in the left lane helped cause the crash, according to State Patrol. It's unclear whether the driver of that vehicle was cited.

Two lanes on the three-lane span were blocked while emergency responders cleaned up the crash and the vehicles were towed. The collision was cleared around 7 p.m., but traffic was backed up to the Clark County Fairgrounds area in Ridgefield for at least another 45 minutes.

David Holmes said it took him three hours to drive from downtown Vancouver to his home in Kalama.

Other, less serious collisions on I-5 in north Clark County contributed to the traffic mess.

“We've been running from one collision to another,” said Washington State Patrol Trooper Stephen Robley.

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Child buys Nazi themed toy from vending machine for 25 cents

Posted: 11:16 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 10, 2014

fox23.com

Nazi vending machine ring photo

Leona Kelley tells FOX23 her son purchased the Nazi-themed ring for just 25 cents.

Nazi ring vending machine store photo

The Family Dollar in North Tulsa had at least 10-15 more Nazi swastika rings inside its quarter bubble toy vending machine on Wednesday night.

By Rick Maranon

TULSA, Okla. —

A Tulsa mother is outraged by what her son bought at the local dollar store for a quarter Wednesday afternoon.

Leona Kelley told FOX23 she always gives her son a quarter for the small plastic bubble toys at the front of many stores whenever her family goes shopping. Now, she's thinking twice.

"We actually bought four things, and three of them were little dinosaurs or something," Kelley said. "And on the fourth one, it so happend this fell out."

She is referring to is a gold-colored plastic ring with a Nazi symbol clearly printed on the front.

"You don't want to know what my reaction was," Kelley said. "I just started yelling at the store people like 'what the hmmm is this!'. I'm like 'why is this here?'."

Kelley said thankfully her four-year-old son doesn't know what a swastika is yet, and he's more upset about mom not letting him keep the small ring toy.

FOX23 went to the Family Dollar store in north Tulsa near East Pine Street and Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard to find out how the ring ended up in a machine used by children. FOX23 found there were an estimated ten to fifteen more swastika rings in the machine mixed in with other jewlery that features dinosaurs and happy faces.

Family Dollar told FOX23 they don't maintain or stock the vending machine, and they've had trouble with the vendor in the past.

Kelley went to other Family Dollar stores around Tulsa and did not find the Nazi rings in any other vending machines. She said she believes the vendor may have intentionally put the rings in a predominately African American neighborhood.

"It was made just like the other rings they've got in there," Kelley said. "You can bend it up and shove it in here. So it was made for a vending machine. I just don't understand why."

Family Dollar allowed FOX23 inside the store to get the vendor's contact information. We found an Oklahoma Tax Commission license and a Lawton, Oklahoma-area phone number, but the vending company's name was not on the machine itself.

FOX23 called the number on the machine, and the man who answered said he had "no comment", but before ending the call, said the items inside the machine will be examined and removed in the next few days.

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Children investgate ‘Creature From Curridge’ | NewburyToday.co.uk

Reporter: James Williams Reporter

Email: james.williams@newburynews.co.uk
Contact: 01635 886633

52-0712A Creature from Curridge

Curridge Creature_2

WITH the identity of the fantastical beast dubbed the ‘Creature From Curridge’ still a mystery, pupils from the village school have decided to investigate.

The bushy-tailed, long necked creature was spotted by West Berkshire businessman, Don Prater, at about 4.55pm on October 3.

The 67-year-old, who owns Yarn Fest at Hillier Garden Centre in Hermitage with his wife, Christine, was walking his Border Collie called Bozzy when he spotted the animal behind the Women’s Institute Hall in Curridge.

As yet, no-one has been able to identify the beast, so pupils from Curridge Primary School have decided to examine the case.

Teacher of year three and four pupils in willow class, Lisa Wilson said: “We started writing poems about the creature and then we created books about the creature with moving parts.”

In the pupils’ story the creature visits the school, playing in the playground, eating food in the kitchen before wrecking the headteacher, Marilyn Dollard’s office.

A number of the pupils, such as Ben Morris claim to have seen the animal

“It looks like a llama with a long neck and a long squirrel’s tail and cat-like ears that stand up,” he said.

While Lucy Shires said her one-year-old cat called Poppy has also seen the creature.

“When poppy first saw it she ran away, but then I was her jump on the creature’s back,” she added.

Others, like Emily Wallace have not seen the animal, but have heard strange noises in the village.

“I heard a hissing coming from the woods,” Emily said.

Friends Josh Northford and Jake Murray have composed a song about the creature, which they perform to classmates.

Mr Prater, who is yet to see the creature since October 3, said: “I think it’s a great idea that the class have done a project on the creature.

“I actually went to see the school the day after I spotted the creature to see if they had seen anything.

“Nobody can come up with anything credible as an explanation. The most staggering thing about the creature was the length of its neck.”

General consensus in the Newbury Weekly News newsroom is that the creature, depicted in Mr Prater’s sketch (pictured), looks like an alpaca or llama.

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Chimney Rock, a high stone outcropping near Asheville that can be see for miles, was home to some of the strangest apparitions ever recorded in North Carolina. In the first few years of the Nineteenth Century, residents around the rock reported a number of unusual sightings, including angelic hosts and a battle between armies on winged horses.

The story begins on July 31, 1806, when eight-year-old Elizabeth Reaves, whose family lived in Buncombe County near Chimney Rock, told her older brother that that she had seen a man on top of Chimney Rock. In the days before rock climbing was a hobby, this would have been unheard of. Her brother refused to believe her, but when she persuaded him to go look young Morgan Reaves saw not just one, but thousands of people flying through the air around Chimney Rock.

The people the Reaves children saw were described as being clothed in brilliant white, ranging in size from infant to adult. While they were generally human in shape, the children could make out no distinct features, and there was no clear differentiation in age or gender.

The children called to their mother, Patsy Reaves, who came running. All in all six people saw the apparition. In addition to Elizabeth, Morgan, and Mrs. Patsy Reaves, the youngest Reaves daughter Polly, a neighbor, Mr. Robert Siercy, and an African-American woman who is unnamed in the original reports, all spent the next hour watching a strange spectacle unfold.

The crowd of beings rose to the top of Chimney Rock, and when all but a few had gathered there, three members of the crowd rose up above the others, hover there, and then led the congregation of shining beings up through the air to disappear into the heavens.

The account of this strange apparition was printed a few weeks later in the *Raleigh Register and Gazette*, and then cited again in Edward Augustus Kendall's *Travels Through the Northern Parts of the United States in the Years 1807 and 1808*.

Several years later in 1811, another, perhaps even more strange, apparition appeared y Chimney Rock, when a pair of armies riding tiny, winged horses met in a fierce battle in the air.

Over the course of several evenings in the summer of that year, multiple witnesses in different locations saw two opposing bands of cavalry riding winged horses circling each other in the sky. On the final evening, the two armies finally engaged each other and clashed in the sky over Chimney Rock. The spectral cavalrymen were armed with swords, and witnesses said they could hear the distend sounds of clashing metal and the groans of the wounded. The battle lasted only about ten minutes, at the end of which the defeated army retreated and the victorious army disappeared into the darkness.

Newspapers across the state carried reports of this strange battle. A public meeting was held in Rutherfordton, and public speculation soon settled on the idea that the battle was a divine vision of highlights from the not-so-far distant Revolutionary War. Why exactly the laws of space and time would be bent so spectacularly to give a handful of spectators an early version of The History Channel wasn't really questioned, but people had more faith in democracy in those days.

Why Chimney Rock was host to such supernatural spectacle in two centuries ago and whether anything like it will be seen again remains a mystery. Today, however, Chimney Rock is a state park, and the certainty of the spectacle of natural beauty awaits visitors.

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Christingle: The Christmas tradition that only got going in the 1960s

18December2014

bbc.com

girl with candle

Many churches and schools celebrate Christmas with a candle in an orange. But where does this curious tradition come from, asks Clare Spencer.

Every year from mid-November to as late as February, many British children stick sweets on cocktail sticks, stick them in an orange, put a candle on top and gather together.

This is Christingle.

The roots of the practice lie with John de Watteville in Germany and an attempt to get children to think about Jesus. He started the tradition in 1747 in his Moravian Church congregation. At the time it was just a candle with a red ribbon given to each child. It didn't involve the orange. Or jelly tots on cocktail sticks.

But it wasn't made popular in the UK until 1968 when John Pensom, described in his Church Times obituary as "Mr Christingle", used it as a fundraising event for the Children's Society charity. Children would bring purses with money and receive an orange pierced with a candle in return. In 1972, the Times noted the increasing popularity of the services.

It's unclear where the orange part of the object came from. It has echoes of the scented pomander, which can be an orange studded with cloves.

Some schools have a Christingle service on the last day of term

Christingle service

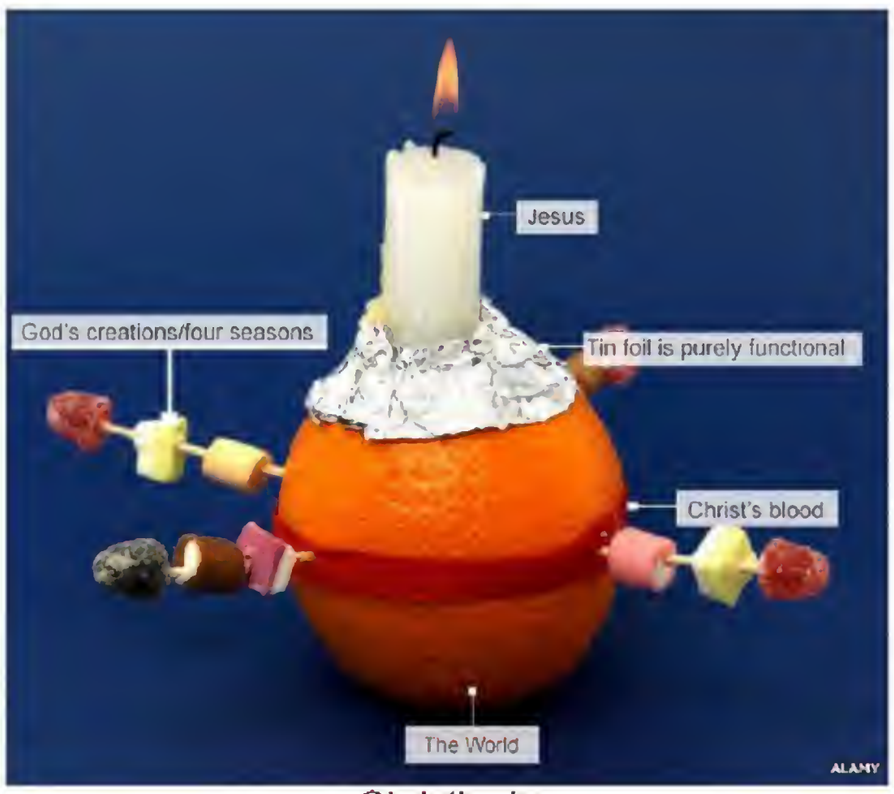
Over 40 years later, the charity estimates more than 5,000 Christingle events were held last year to fundraise for them. But the idea has spread further than just this charity. In Northern Ireland it has been used as a way to get the different denominations together.

In fundraising terms, the Christingle is getting more popular. The money raised went up from £1m to £1.2m least year, says Children's Society's director of church and community participation Nigel Varndell.

The newest variation involves changing the candle to a glowstick. It's been prompted by the concern among some organisers that children should not be carrying lit candles. The Daily Telegraph reported back in 2006 that Chelmsford Cathedral had gone the way of the glowstick after a particularly crammed service made them worry that children's hair could catch fire.

Candle or glowstick, it does attract bemusement.

On Christian website Ship of Fools, one commenter remembered their first encounter with a Christingle. It was "absolutely bizarre and utterly unlike any Christmas tradition I'd ever heard of". Even a Christian education website, Assembly Line, admits it looks like "a rather strange creation".



Christingle

What some participants say the parts of the Christingle symbolise

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- It's the Caption Challenge. Oh yes it is.
- A woman challenged a parking ticket for parking perpendicular to the pavement in a Smart car. Is it legal?

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CIA responsible for half of UFO sightings in the 50s and 60s

upi.com

The CIA noted on Twitter one of its most read documents this year was about UFO sightings.

By Thor Benson | Updated Dec. 29, 2014 at 10:54 PM

LANGLEY, Va., Dec. 29 (UPI) -- The CIA noted via Twitter Monday that it was responsible for at least half of UFO sightings in the 1950s and 60s.

"Reports of unusual activity in the skies in the '50s? It was us," the agency tweeted.

The document the tweet links to is a previously confidential report on the testing of the U-2 spy plane at altitudes of over 60,000 feet. It says half or more of supposed UFO sightings were actually times when they were flying the plane at high altitudes, which people didn't realize was possible at the time.

Though they realized people were spotting the plane by cross-referencing the sightings with when and where the plane was flying, the agency couldn't inform the public of that knowledge. The agency says the document explaining that scenario was the most widely read document released this year from their database.

The U-2 is now flown by the United States Air Force, and 104 have been built in total. One was shot down by the Soviet Union in May of 1960 at 70,500 feet during the first attempt to cross the Soviet Union by going from Pakistan's air space to Norway's.

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Circus tricked kids with dogs painted as pandas

One of the chow chow dogs seized by police. Photo: Corpo Forestale dello Stato

Circus tricked kids with dogs painted as pandas

Published: 23 Dec 2014 12:07 GMT+01:00
Updated: 23 Dec 2014 13:20 GMT+01:00

Two painted chow chow dogs posing as pandas have been seized from a circus in northern Italy, after tricking children into handing over cash, police have said.

The male and female dogs were seized by police after it became clear that they were not, in fact, pandas.

To an unassuming child visiting the circus in Brescia, a small furry animal with white and black stripes may do the trick.

But The Local readers may notice a distinct difference. Here is a real panda:

Panda photo by Shutterstock

Panda photo by Shutterstock.

And here are the dogs-in-disguise:

The police were not fooled, who said the dogs were put on display ahead of the circus show. Children posed for photos with the animals, paying a fee for the "panda" privilege.

The environmental police moved in to seize the animals, which they said were in general good health but had particularly watery eyes. This was "probably aggravated by the continuous exposure to camera flashes", Italy's environmental police said in a statement.

Police moved in on animal cruelty grounds and the circus owner is facing charges over the animals' false passports. The chow chows were imported from Hungary and were six months younger than documents stated, police said.

The circus owner could also be caught for cheating his customers out of cash.

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Man Stole Dad's Body From Cemetery, Hid It In Basement Freezer In Hopes Of Resurrection

newsone.com

Jan 15, 2013
By Associated Press

DETROIT – Police arrested a man Tuesday in the theft of his father's corpse, which was taken from a cemetery before it could be buried and was found in the son's basement.

Clarence Bright's 48-year-old son was arrested with another man when officers found them with an empty casket inside a van at a gas station, Officer George Day said.

Police did not disclose a motive for the theft of the body.

"The details, his mental state , I can't comment on," Stephens said.

Fox 2 News Detroit reports that the body was found in a freezer and that the son allegedly stole it because he believed he could resurrect his father.

Bright's final earthly journey was supposed to end Saturday at Gethsemane Cemetery on Detroit's east side, but soggy ground from recent rain postponed the burial of the 93-year-old.

The casket was placed near a chapel or a mausoleum on cemetery grounds and remained there through Monday morning when it was reported stolen, said Leon Jones, a mortician's assistant at Swanson Funeral Home, which handled Bright's funeral.

"This is a very, very bizarre situation," Jones said.

Acting on a tip that a white van had been seen at the cemetery around the time the body was taken, police spotted one parked at a gas station Tuesday, with the men and the empty casket inside, Day said.

Within an hour, investigators contacted by family located Bright's body a few blocks away in the basement of a bungalow that belongs to the arrested son, Sgt. Eren Stephens said.

"Nothing seems to be wrong with the body," Day told reporters. "Hopefully, the family can now get the body back and give it a proper burial."

Police declined to release the names of Bright's son or the 38-year-old man who was with him. They had not been charged and the theft remained under investigation.

Across the street, resident Terri Gaines, 36, said she didn't have much contact with Bright's son.

"He's so quiet. He just goes in and out. He never had company," Gaines said.

Jones said there was nothing unusual at the weekend funeral.

"People come in, they're grieving," he said. "We just try to comfort people."

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Police release CCTV of suspect dressed as CLOWN after nightclub assaults

mirror.co.uk

- Dec 12, 2014 12:49
- By Chris Richards

Cops want to trace the colourfully-dressed reveller after two men were attacked in the toilets of a nightspot in Plymouth, Devon

This CCTV footage shows a man dressed as a CLOWN who is wanted by police following two nightclub assaults.

Two men were injured when they were attacked in the gents' toilets of the Crash Manor nightclub in Plymouth, Devon, at around 3am on November 1.

One victim, 23, sustained a broken jaw when he was punched in the face.

He required extensive surgery to repair his mandible.

Suspect: Do you recognise this 'clown'?

Suspect: Do you recognise this 'clown'?

The second victim, 37, suffered whiplash and concussion when he was struck on the back of the head.

Devon and Cornwall Police now say they "very much" want to trace the man seen in this footage.

Call 101 if you recognise him.

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Cow Flees Butcher Shop

huffingtonpost.com

Cow Flees Idaho Butcher Shop, Gets Chased By Police

Posted: 12/14/2014 12:49 pm EST Updated: 12/14/2014 12:59 pm EST

POCATELLO, Idaho (AP) — A 1,000-pound cow being prepared for slaughter jumped a 6-foot fence and bolted through the streets of Pocatello before police shot and killed it following a lengthy pursuit.

Pocatello Police Chief Scott Marchand tells the Idaho State Journal (http://bit.ly/1DtMaME) that his officers fired two shots at the heifer because it posed a safety risk.

The cow had escaped from Anderson Custom Pack, a meat processing business, on Friday afternoon.

Early in the chase, an officer shot the cow in the head but the wounded animal kept running.

The cow led police and animal control officers on a chase on foot and in vehicles through the city's north side. It rammed an animal control truck and two police cars.

The animal was eventually cornered in a residential backyard about 3 miles away, and was shot and killed by a police officer.

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Crimean Military Dolphins to Serve in Russian Navy / Sputnik International

2014-03-26T10:26:00Z sputniknews.com

SEVASTOPOL, March 26 (RIA Novosti) - The combat dolphin program in the Crimean city of Sevastopol will be preserved and redirected towards the interests of the Russian Navy, an employee at the facility where the dolphins are trained told RIA Novosti.

The program, dating to the 1960s, was previously scheduled to be disbanded by the Ukrainian navy in April, but the facility and the dolphins themselves have now become Russian following the reunification of Crimea with Russia last week.

"The oceanarium's engineers are developing new instruments for new applications to boost the operational efficiency of the dolphins underwater," the employee said, requesting anonymity. The employee added the animals are currently outfitted with extremely outdated equipment.

The dolphins are trained to patrol open water and attack or attach buoys to items of military interest, such as mines on the sea floor or combat scuba divers trained to slip past enemy security perimeters, known as frogmen. Man-made sonar systems are often incapable of detecting such small objects in crowded environments such as harbors.

"Our experts have developed new devices, which convert the detection of objects by the dolphins' underwater sonar to a signal on an operator's monitor," the source said. "But the Ukrainian Navy lacked the funds for such know-how, and some projects had to be shuttered."

The source expressed hope the Russian navy would support the combat program, which also trains sea lions.

Following the breakup of the Soviet Union, the dolphin program was handed over to the Ukrainian navy, where it was initially reconverted for civilian uses, such as working with disabled children. The military arm of the facility was re-formed in 2011.

The facility is one of only two such combat dolphin training centers in the world, the other is run by the US Navy in San Diego.

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Croatia's Magnetic Boy: Real Mutant or Sticky Situation? - Who Forted? Magazine

By Greg Newkirk on May 24, 2011

whofortedblog.com

Ivan Stoiljkovic, Croatia's "Magnetic Boy"

Over the past few months, an amazing story about a little Croation boy who appears to be magnetic, seemingly able to lug around up to 55 lbs of metal objects clung to his body, has been making it's rounds on the internet. But don't call Professor Xavier yet, because the skeptics have a few things to say first.

Six year old Ivan Stoiljkovic, a pudgy little boy from the Northern Croatia city of Koprivnica, quickly became the talk of the town after his family discovered that their child was special. Ivan could hold silverware, cell phones, and even frying pans against his body, stuck there by some bizarre human magnetism. As if that wasn't weird enough, his family also claimed that he possessed not only the powers of healing, but incredible strength, to boot.

'When something hurts us, we ask Ivan to put his hands on the sore and the pain disappears in a flash,' said Dragica, Ivan's grandmother.

It didn't take long before word of Ivan's special talents spread, and soon he was a featured story in the UK's Daily Mail, CBS News, MSNBC, and other mainstream news outlets. A video featuring Ivan displaying his talent, taken from a Russian news broadcast, has racked up half a million views on YouTube less than two weeks since being posted.

But there are many who aren't quite so amazed.

Nature's Barbara Ferreira noted that in the popular YouTube video Ivan is seen "magnetically holding" a television remote control and a cell phone against his bare chest. Ferreira deduced that since both of these objects are plastic, which is obviously not magnetic, Ivan's abilities have nothing to do with magnetism at all.

The cause of the young Croation's amazing abilities? He's just sweaty.

Skeptics say that Ivan simply needs a bath

"If Ivan had indeed magnetic powers, he wouldn't have the need to bend slightly backwards to keep the items stuck to his body. In fact, he could bend forwards and they wouldn't fall," Ferreira wrote.

She goes on to suggest that due to the natural oils of the human body creating a large, smooth surface area for chemical bonds, this kind of "magnetism" is something we've all experienced when pulling ourselves out of a leather or plastic seat.

"This is exactly what's happening with Ivan. The skin on his young, hairless chest is very smooth and stickier than usual. Furthermore, all the objects he holds to his body, particularly the heavier ones, have very smooth surfaces. So they stick."

This could easily explain why Ivan's powers are said to be strongest in the early morning, when he's covered with sweat and oil after a long night's sleep.

Bummer. But hey, while little Ivan is may not be the real-life incarnate of the X-Men's Magneto, he's certainly on the fast track **to becoming a different Marvel super-villain..**

Visit **Barbara Ferreira's blog** for more of her thoughts on magnetic children.

1. Lou

05/24/2011 at 12:34 PM

Another mystery which I have been called upon to solve. I will tell you why this lil milk drinking junkie stuck to him. Its not the sweat or glue thats on his body. This boys eats magnets,,,tons & tons of them, just look at him !! How do I know this, look at the pic of his stomach, the magnets inside that belly are pulling OUT towards the metal. Sheesh.

NEXT !

Reply

2. Korbus

05/30/2011 at 1:56 PM

I once saw video of a father & son team in Indonesia or somewhere doing the same thing. As a test, talcum powder was sprinkled around their chest. Of course, nothing would "stick" after that. The look on their faces when their powers disappeared was…so…funny. You could actually see their pride crumbling.

Reply

- Greg Newkirk

05/30/2011 at 2:36 PM

Funny how the magnetic dudes never come from the US, UK, Australia, etc.

Reply

3. Miss_Majic

05/30/2011 at 2:15 PM

I was gonna say he's not magnetic it's the sweat in his fat folds sticking the stuff to him

Reply

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Crybaby Lane is a creepy little stretch of deserted grass off Western Boulevard in Raleigh with a sad, scary story tied to it. The story begins in the middle of the last century, when what's now called Crybaby Lane was the site of a Roman Catholic orphanage. The orphanage was the home to a few dozen young boys and girls, who were raised by the priests, as had been happening there since the orphanage had been founded half a century earlier. We can assume these orphans lived as orphans did in those days, going to school to learn a useful trade, and once a week during the summers being taken down to swim in the pool at nearby Pullen Park. Since this was a Catholic home, some of the older boys would be studying for the priesthood. For those children without parents there weren't many options back then. It may not have been a completely happy life, but it was more than it could have been.

This all came to a tragic end one night in 1958 when a fire broke out in the orphanage dormitory. The fire spread quickly through the building, by the time the sleeping children were aware of the smoke and the heat filling the hallways of their only home it was too late. By the time the fire department arrived, the building had been gutted, reduced to burnt beams and flame-broken bricks. Many of the children burned to death in the flames.

Months after the fire, when after what remained of the burned orphanage had been torn down and hauled away, the city began receiving complaints from the neighbors that the smell of smoke was still strong in the air, as if the fire was still burning. The smell was so strong that some people would choke when they walked into the field, like their own lungs were filling up with smoke, even though the new grass had already covered up where the building once stood.

But the smell of smoke was only part of it — there were also the voices.

The voices came in on the air, quietly at first, then growing louder. They were the voices of children, crying, wailing in fear, sadness, and pain. The screams of the orphaned children who had died in the fire could still be heard.

Now, some of the neighbors thought it was just their minds playing tricks on then. They had been there the night of the fire and seen and heard these horrible things, and they thought that they just couldn't get the awful memories out of their heads. But time passed, and the people who had been there that night all died or moved away, but still the acrid smell of smoke lingered, and the cries of the children could still be heard.

If you go to find this place yourself, you'll see that most of the houses around the field where the orphanage once stood have been abandoned. The place where the orphanage stood is now an empty field. If you hunt through the grass you'll be able to find the cornerstone, all that's left of the old orphanage.

And after you've stood in the field for a few minutes, you'll start to notice that the place has a

strange, distinct smell. It's the odor of smoke and burning wood.

And if you stay a few minutes more, you'll begin to hear something strange in the air — awful, unearthly sounds — the cries of children in fear and in pain, but still never able to leave the only place on earth that they ever knew as a home.

And not many people will stay much longer than that in the empty field that's come to be called Crybaby Lane.

How to Get There

Crybaby Lane is off of Bilyeu Street in Raleigh.

When in Raleigh drive down Western Boulevard headed downtown. When you see the convenience store that stands on the edge of Pullen Park on your left, take the next right on to Bilyeu.

Pass the State House apartments where Bilyeu turns to gravel and then ends, park there and walk up the hill on a short, well-worn path. This is Crybaby Lane.

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Curiosity for Curiosity! UFO hunter spots 'coffin' on Mars (VIDEO)

rt.com

Published time: December 29, 2014 17:02
Get short URL

Still from Youtube video (WhatsUpInTheSky37)

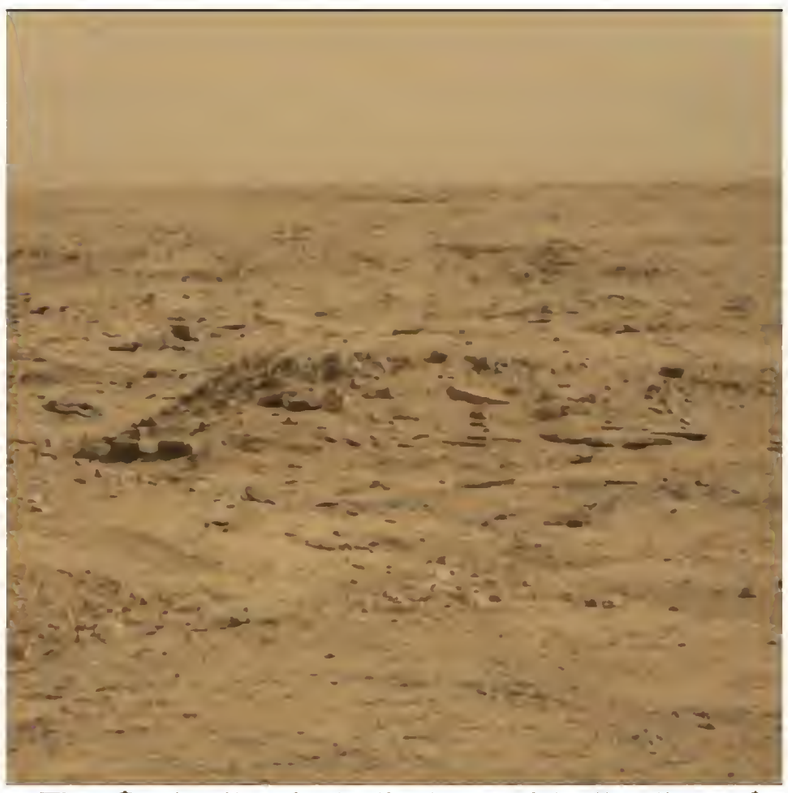
An 'alien coffin' might possibly be added to the long list of curious objects found on the surface of the Red Planet. Puzzled UFO enthusiasts now want NASA's Curiosity rover to take a closer look.

Will Farrar, a UFO (unidentified flying object) hunter from Maryland, US, noticed a strange, box-shaped object as he was looking through a set of photos, taken by the Mars Curiosity rover.

On his YouTube channel, WhatsUpintheSky37, Farrar wrote: "This little box sure does look like a modern coffin concrete liner."

"As well as the stonework on the back part of the hill that looks like stairs or some left over stonework from some old civilizations' constructions," he added.

READ MORE: Ancient Mars had massive lake, was potentially a wet planet



The Curiosity photo that caught attention of UFO hunters (Image from NASA)

Alien researcher Scott Waring of the UFO Sightings Daily website also believed the stone object could be a coffin, and might be of some interest to the US space agency.

"Coffins are made to stand the test of time, but this one is made from a stone like substance," Waring blogged on Sunday. *"What would it take to get NASA to tum the rover around and examine the contents of this box?"*

READ MORE: Life on Mars? Carbon-containing meteorite from Red Planet restarts debate

However, many scientists believe that recognition of strange objects – signs of alien life or images of prominent people's faces, such as Barack Obama's, which was also spotted on the surface of Mars – could just be a case of pareidolia.

Pareidolia is a psychological phenomenon of noticing a significant pattern in unexpected places. The 'man in the moon' is a common example.

- "Pareidolia is a psychological phenomenon of noticing a significant pattern in unexpected places. The ‘man in the moon’ is a common example." How can I not love you, RT? :D
- Surprise surprise, another drooling Murican.
- OMG I just saw it move!
- like to see the box on a full moon, i mean if its open.
- Look guys this may not be unusual.If there can be life in this earth why cannot be in Mars. It is possible there can be millions of planet where there are life. Imagine how big is the galaxy and the milky way and beyond. I think the scientist too amateur to understand scientifically. The scientist will not come to a conclusion even they research about it for billions of years because the space is infinite and there are always planet. How ever the scientist has done wonder job for human being of this earth. But they have also built nuclear weapons which can destroy may be more than 20 earths like this. probably Mars became victim of Nuclear war millions of year ago when there were human and the scientists
    - So coffins are a universal phenomenon ... sni gger. By the way, humans are incapable of destroying the Earth.

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Bath town sits on the mouth of the Pamlico River. In the Eighteenth Century, Bath was an important port for the Carolina colonies. Ships traveling across the Atlantic Community would stop there, selling, resupplying, and trading. It's location to the mazes of inlets and hidden coves that shape the North Carolina coastline also made it a favored haunt of pirates, who appreciated having a convenient hiding place when the British Navy showed up. Bath was said to be a favorite haunt of the pirate Blackbeard, who is said to have had a house and a wife or two in the town.

The local government turned a blind eye to the sources of the wealth that was pouring into the town. Bath soon developed a reputation as a freewheeling, easygoing kind of place. Liquor flowed freely, parties lasted all night long, and there was a whole lot of fooling around.

But, as is the way with these things, whenever too many people start having a good time, inevitably someone shows up to ruin the fun.

The traveling evangelist George Whitefield was one of the first celebrities in the American colonies. This staunch, cross-eyed, strictly Calvinist evangelist was reputed to have a voice that would carry for five miles. He used that voice to preach a grim vision of hellfire and damnation all up and down the American Colonies.

Whitefield was one of the prime movers of the wave of religious fervor that swept the American Colonies just before the Revolution. His sermons and the passion they inspired came to be known as "The Great Awakening," and the good times to be had when the booze was flowing in towns like Bath were a prime target for his condemnation.

One of Whitefield's pieces of evangelical stagecraft was to always travel in a wagon in which he carried his own coffin. Whitefield used the coffin to illustrate that he was prepared for death and confident in his own salvation. To drive the point even further home, Whitefield always slept in the coffin.

Needless to say, a strange, cross-eyed preacher who slept in a coffin and shouted about eternal damnation was not a welcome presence in a town that had come to accept the idea that doing what you wanted, when you wanted, was actually a pretty good way to go through life.

When Whitefield visited Bath, he was met by a congregation of locals who suggested that he might just want to turn around and head back the way he came. They may even have suggested that should he choose to stick around, at least they would be grateful that he'd spared them the expense of building a coffin.

Angrily taking the hint, Whitefield climbed back on his wagon, took off his shoe and waved it at the assembled crowd, and proceeded to place a curse on the town.

"If a place won't listen to The Word," Whitefield said, "You shake the dust of the town off your feet, and the town shall be cursed. I have put a curse on this town for a hundred years."

Whitefield's curse seemed to have an effect. Shortly thereafter, the nearby town of Washington and its larger and more easily accessible port began to suck away Bath's prosperity. The money stopped rolling in and the good times came to an end with them. By the middle of the Nineteenth Century, Bath had dwindled to a small, sleepy backwater, the same quiet little hamlet that's there today.

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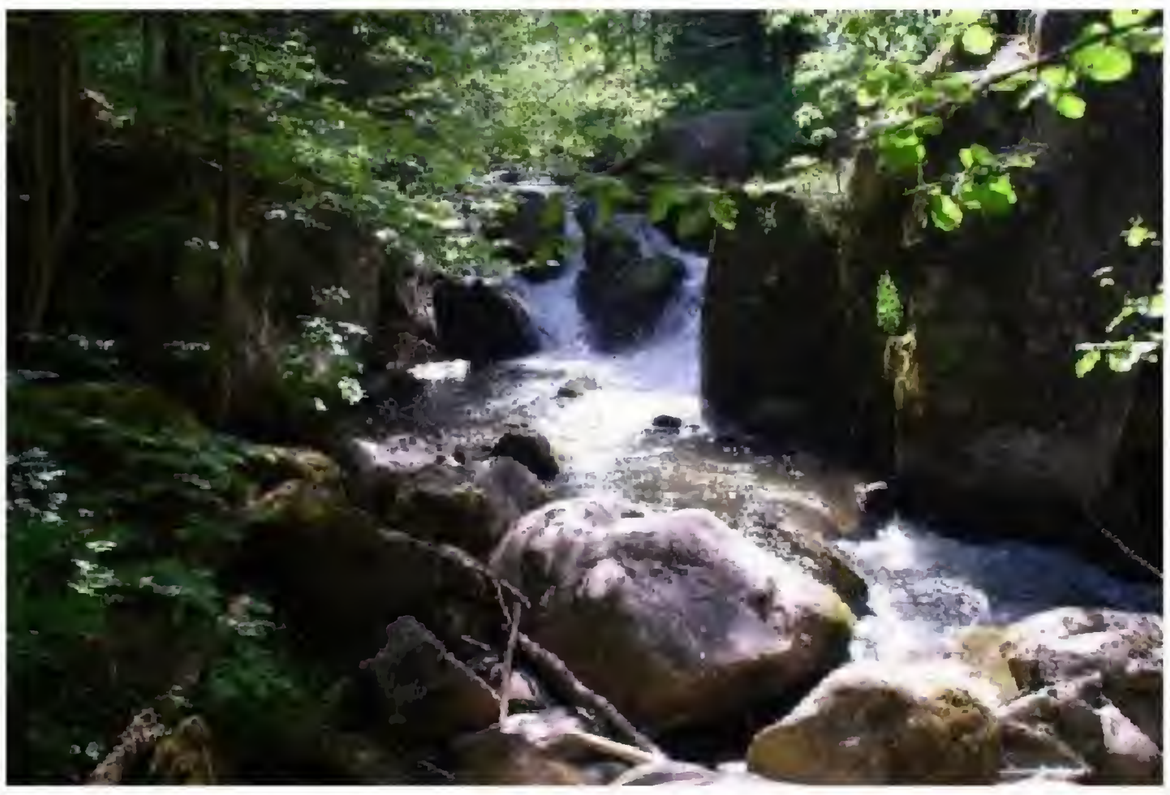
"The Cursed Bridge of the Faeries Over the Vologne River (Vosges Mountains)."

Translated from "Maudit Pont des Fées enjambant la Vologne (Vosges)," an article that was originally published in *Le Pays lorrain* in 1908, then reprinted online in *La France pittoresque* in October 2013.

A Vosgian1 legend states that a well-formed hunter from Gérardmer, who had been promised a glorious destiny so long as he never allowed himself to be seduced by any woman, permitted himself one day on the banks of the Vologne to be lulled by the kiss of an ondine with river green eyes, coral lips, and an enchantress' voice....



(La Vologne. Image copyrighted 2009 by Flauder. Used with photographer's permission)

Once upon a time, at Gérardmer, in the picturesque region of the Vosges mountains, there lived a hunter so handsome, so captivating, and so well-formed that no woman nor girl could resist his charms. He hunted the wildest animals, despising the dangers, happy if some stag or boar fell to his shots. As soon as it was morning, once the fresh dawn appeared, he would set out, traversing brambles and brush wet with dew, always on his guard, never missing his beast.

And so on each day. He would return home to his thatch-roofed cottage (for he lived in a cottage and not a palace, being as poor as he was handsome) in the evening, hours after night had fallen, and his courage and his prowess were spoken of for roughly twenty-five leagues around. People would buy his game, which reaped a fat profit for him, but he had eight little brothers and eight little sisters for whom he spent all that he gained, wanting them to lack for nothing. Sometimes he even went without food, happy if those whom he loved had what they needed. He had promised his parents at the moment of their death to take care of the sixteen little monsters.

Killing a lot of fat game, he clothed himself with pelts, which only served to intensify his male beauty. As well, many girls would have been happy to have him for a husband, since, as we have mentioned previously, they were foolishly in love with him. But he did not even notice them, having neither the time nor the inclination, finding them all repulsive.

But there was another reason besides.... An old woman, who everyone said was a faerie, who attended his birth and was his godmother, had proclaimed that he would be handsome

and brave and would attain the highest honors so long as he never let himself be seduced by any woman. He knew her words and kept himself on his guard.

(Le pont des fées. Image copyrighted 2009 by Flauder. Used with photographer's permission)

One day, when he had been pursuing a doe since dawn and had yet to obtain her by noon, he felt so overcome with fatigue that he fell asleep amid the ferns in the great trees' shade on the bank of a mountain stream whose white and frothy water fell from cascade to cascade. There, in the dense forest, the air was sweet and refreshing. An old bridge, constructed entirely from stones centuries and centuries ago, it is said, by faeries' deft hands, conjoined the neighboring mountains' slopes. Eyes closed, the hunter appeared haunted by delicious dreams, and his beauty was resplendently striking.

He was sleeping, lulled by birds' song and the patter of waves, when he felt, suddenly, a kiss pressed to his cheek. Before him appears2 the most astonishing vision he has ever seen: a woman, more beautiful than daylight, there and regarding him. Her eyes are river green, her cheeks incarnadine, and her lips coral. Her blonde hair falls to her feet, half-hiding an exquisite body where drops of iridescent water gleam. She smiles sweetly at the hunter.

Overwhelmed by so many charms, he believes he is still dreaming. Words stick in his throat, so preoccupied is he with admiring her!

But she approaches, encircles the young man's neck in her alabaster arms, and, with a voice like heavenly music, says, "Oh, my handsome hunter, why do you not respond to my kiss? ...Do I frighten you? I am she who protects you, and who, by her arts, watches over you from afar, at night while you rest, in daylight when you run through the woods. I am she whose spirit follows you wherever you might go, and who, without fail, protects you from all harm! Come....Come to me, oh my handsome hunter!"3

Aroused by her words, he feels the flames of his desire so keenly that he drops to his knees before her and cries, "Oh, no! You are so beautiful and so sweet. I am not afraid of you, you who unfailingly protects me, as you say, oh no, I am not afraid of you...!"

And he proclaims that he loves her more than himself, pulls her ardently against him, and covers her hands with kisses. Smiling, she looks up at him and replies, "Oh my handsome hunter, come with me! ...Come to my crystal palace, where years pass more swiftly than days, where one lives happily in pleasures without number and joys without end, where the weather is always fair and one never has to work! Come to my crystal palace, oh my handsome hunter...!"

She kisses him, caresses him, holds him more tightly in her arms. Seduced, he does not resist her but little by little abandons himself. Together they roll, intertwined, on the moss, then on the path. She guides him to the stream's edge.... Already they touch the green algae. She kisses him, and kisses him again, then, suddenly, feeling him under her power, her laughter rings out, and she casts him, tumbling down with her, into the deep4 water...!

The hunter had cried out5, but the stream had only let a strangled moan escape, which reverberated far across the mountain. Then everything became calm once more: the white water continued to fall from cascade to cascade, the birds to sing, and the pine trees to sway gently in the wind....

Never again did the hunter return to his cottage, where his eight little brothers and eight little sisters perished from hunger. But he is still spoken of in the surrounding countryside. A superstitious fear6 lingers in the place where he disappeared. Ever since, no one can pass it by without trembling, and in the long evenings of winter, in the cottages of the poor, when they gather to tell hearth tales by the light of the flickering fire, old women tell the story of the young hunter to shocked, little children.

And they are gripped by fear at this tale, because they are told that sometimes, at midnight, the ancient winds of the Vosges mountains echo with the frightening cries of the drowning hunter, or that still one can hear the divine melody of love songs issuing from beneath the waves, two voices mingled in golden harmony, one voice strong and male from he who is no more and the tender, enchantress' voice from the ondine with river green eyes and coral lips....

For the edification of our soul
Each tale's end requires a moral,
Just as in Donkeyskin or Puss-in-Boots Perrault
Himself has given us an example.
Thus, may it please you, Gentle Reader,
To derive this lesson from the tale:
That you must always obey your godmother
So over misfortune you may prevail.
Next, do not allow yourself to fall
For one who, with enchantment in her eyes,
Seeks with her charm to seduce and lull.
Ere long, you will wish you had been wise.
For if, in the rush of those first instants,
Your heart might sing sweet songs of delight,
You will soon, alas! count far more moments
Where it cries out with your agony and fright.7

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1. The Vologne river extends west of the Vosges Mountains, located in the Alsace-Lorraine region near the border of France and Germany.↩

2. Abruptly changes to French storytelling-present tense, to make everything more

immediate. Up to this point it has been imperfect (these are the things he's been accustomed to doing, setting the scene) and simple past, which is a past tense the French use just for telling stories.↩

3. If, as fae-kind, the ondine cannot lie but can only misuse the truth, then I can't help but love the imagery of the ondine being his godmother's foil and opposing force, watching over him and lying in wait until she had this chance to take him. Or...perhaps...what if the ondine has been his "godmother" all along, and only gave him the prophecy in order to keep him for herself? Either way, I like the contrast between the hunter's two "guardian" faeries.↩

4. Deep? And yet by the images we see the water is shallow. I like to think there is something supernatural going on, where a woman can rise from shallow water and pull him down into mysterious depths.↩

5. Back to past tense.↩

6. I like the phrase "superstitious fear" rather than "superstitious belief" that is more commonly said in English.↩

7. Let's just say that the original poem was not written by one of France's top poets, so I do not feel entirely bad that not everything rhymes exactly, &c. In any case, I hope you enjoyed this month's folktale!↩

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Dahu

The **dahu** is a legendary creature well known in France, Switzerland[1] and the north of Italy.

French, Italian and Swiss pranksters often describe the dahu as a mountain goat-like animal with legs of different sides having differing lengths to fit the mountain's side.

Regional variations on its name include **dahut** or **dairi** in Jura, **darou** in Vosges or **darhut** in Burgundy; also called a **tamarou** in Aubrac and Aveyron), and **tamarro** in Catalonia and Andorra. The dahu cub is called a **dahuot**.

Description[edit]

In French lore, the dahu has the appearance of a deer or ibex, but with the principal characteristic that its legs on one side of its body are shorter than on the other side. This enables it to walk upright on the steep slopes of its mountain environment. It can only walk around the mountain in one direction. Legend attributes various differing descriptions to the animal, including the *laevogyrous dahu* (which has shorter legs on the left side, and thus goes around the mountain counter-clockwise) and the *dextrogyre dahu* (which has shorter legs on the right side, and thus goes around the mountain clockwise). These seldom interbreed according to French lore. However, when interbred, it is believed that there are two more types of dahu. These two variations have never been seen, but are believed to exist. These variations have the leg pairs across the diagonals. This means that the dahu can have a long front right and back left leg, or a long front left leg and back right leg. It is also said that male Dahus have legs shorter on the right side and that females have shorter legs on the left side, thus making them walk in opposite directions around the mountains enabling to find each other and mate. Also, the male dahu has testicles that drag down onto the ground leaving a scent trail for members of the opposite sex to trace. Males also use the scent trails to find their next molestation victim, for dahus are known for harassing each other to assert dominance.

Catching a dahu[edit]

French pranksters state that catching a dahu involves two people, one with a bag at the bottom of the mountain slope and another who is good at making dahu sounds. The latter stands behind a dahu and makes the noise. When the dahu turns around to see, it loses its balance and rolls down the hill to the person with the bag at the bottom.

Another method is to have pepper ground onto a large stone; when the dahu, while grazing, comes and sniffs the pepper, it would sneeze and knock itself out against the stone.

Princess Dahut[edit]

Princess Dahut of Cornouaille (Brittany), whose name is homophonous with that of the animal (but often spelled "dahud" in Breton language texts), is sometimes associated with the dahu in modern folklore, as in the following legend: One day she gave the key of her city, Ys, to the Devil, who used it to destroy that city. As a punishment, God transformed her into an animal with the odd and hairy form the Dahu has today.[*citation needed*]

The rise of the dahu[edit]

The dahu is a staple of 20th-century French popular culture, known in Lorraine, in the mountainous regions of eastern France (Alpes and Jura), and in French-speaking Switzerland as a theme of jokes among natives and a spoof for fooling young children. Its popularity began to soar toward the end of the 19th century. The budding tourism industry brought to the mountains wealthy city dwellers with a somewhat arrogant attitude and a paltry knowledge of the countryside. The mountaineers working as hunting guides would take advantage of the gullibility of some tourists to lure them into the "dahu hunt" (in French "chasse au dahu"). The animal was touted as a rare and precious bounty, the capture thereof required waiting alone all night on a chilly slope, crouched in an uncomfortable position.[2] In the second half of the 20th century, the supply of naive hunters had dried up, and the dahu hunt enjoyed a second life as a summer camp spoof.

The dahu today[edit]

Since the last decades of the 20th century, the dahu is widely recognized as a fictional creature, a joke, and a metaphor for a tall tale. This legend has been widely perpetuated by Swiss foreign language teachers intending to play pranks on their students. It has been adopted by other mountainous regions such as the Pyrenees. Recreational "dahu hunts" are sometimes organized as outdoor activities in France and Switzerland. There are dahu websites and dahu aficionados, such as Marcel Jacquat, former director, now retired, of the Natural Science Museum of La Chaux-de-Fonds in Switzerland, who wrote a monograph and opened on 1 April 1995 an exhibition devoted to the animal.[2] On 1 April 1967, the Prefect of Haute-Savoie (France) officially made the mountainous suburbs of the small town of Reigner a "Dahu Sanctuary" where hunting and photography are forbidden.[3] It was a joke, according to the 1st of April tradition, April Fools' Day.

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1. **Jump up ^** http://listserv.buffalo.edu/cgi-bin/wa?A2=ind0010&L=flteach&T=0&P=57041
2. ^ Jump up to: ***a b*** Marcle Jacquat, director of the Natural Science Museum of La Chaux-de-Fonds, citated in *Sciences et Avenir* special issue "Les animaux extraordinaires", July–August 2000
3. **Jump up ^** Catherine Vincent, *Le dahu, insaissisable et pourtant vivace* in *Le Monde* 1t April 2001

Further reading[edit]

Dahu Leroy Patrick, *Le dahu*, ed. Du Mont (27 July 2000) Collection : Encyclopédie ; volume I : ISBN 2-9508216-4-2 ISBN 978-2950821645 ; volume II : ISBN 2-9508216-7-7 ISBN 978-2-9508216-7-6 (French)

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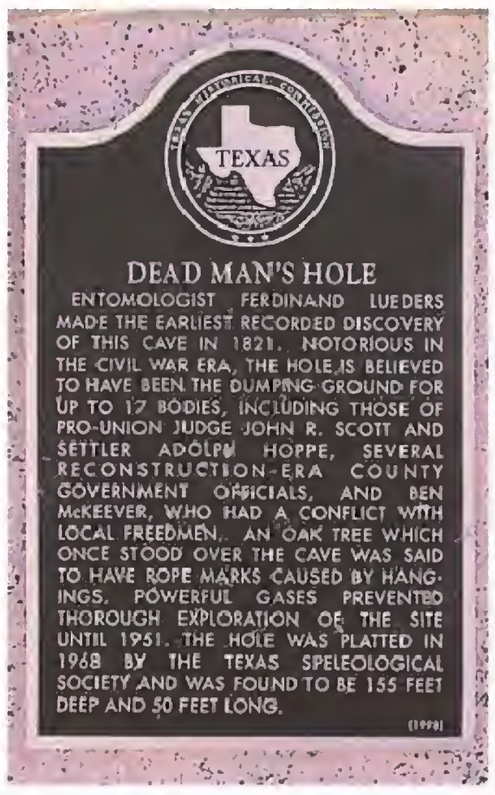
Civil War dumping ground for the bodies of terrorized Union sympathizers



- Dead Man's Hole Photo by Nicolas Henderson on Flickr | Copyright: Creative Commons
- Plaque at the Dead Man's Hole. Photo by Paul Long on Flickr | Copyright: Creative Commons

The Civil War between the Union and Confederacy famously raged in Congress and on the battlefield. Less documented were the clashes between partisan groups in small neighborhoods and communities. For some unlucky Union sympathizers the war fatally ended in a gaping Texas sinkhole.

Dead Man's Hole, as it would be baptized, was discovered in 1821 by Ferdinand Leuders, an entomologist observing nocturnal insects. He recorded his findings without taking much note of the spacious cavity. He had no idea he had stumbled upon what would become a notorious burial ground for ideological murders and lynchings. The hole, located in southern Burnet County, Texas is caused by a buildup of natural gas pressure. It measures 7 feet in diameter at the surface and has a cavernous depth of about 15 stories.

As the Civil War brought destruction and death to the United States, groups of vigilante secessionists materialized in the South wreaking havoc on anyone associated with the Union. These anarchic gangs, colloquially known as bushwhackers and fire-eaters, harassed, robbed, and murdered those with different political and ideological views. One such victim was John R. Scott, a New York born judge living in Burnet County. Despite having four sons serving in the Confederate army, Scott was deemed guilty of espousing Union sympathies and was threatened anonymously. As he fled to Mexico, Scott was assailed by a group of bushwhackers who shot him and jettisoned the body in the fateful Dead Man's Hole.

Similar narratives fill local chronicles. Union sympathizers were either killed on the spot and thrown down the cavern or dragged to it and murdered after a hasty trial. It is thought that 17 bodies in total ended up in Dead Man's Hole. A mysterious epilogue to the hole's gruesome history occurred after sacks of bones were collected from the sinkhole. Awaiting a proper burial in the Burnet County Courthouse, the bones disappeared, never to be recovered.

Edited by:Annetta Black (Admin)zackofalltrades (Editor)Rachel (Admin)Dylan (Admin)EricGrundhauser (Admin)Mordy (Editor)

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The Demon Dog of Valle Crucis

One of the most frightening apparitions in the catalog of North Carolina hauntings comes from the quiet mountain town of Valle Crucis. This small town takes its name, which is Latin for "Valley of the Cross" from the two streams which meet at right angles in the middle of the valley. The morning mist lingers longer in the valley of the cross than elsewhere in the mountains, and even on sunny days the town has a quietness to it that seems to set it apart from the rest of the world.

But it's at night that the supernatural side of Valle Crucis reveals itself. There's a certain old stone church, located along Highway 194 just on the edge of town, where among the leaning graves in the churchyard cemetery something that could not possibly be from this world steps in and out of the shadows.

It happened one time that that two young men were driving along this road around midnight. It was a clear night and the moon was full, bathing the valley in an eerie white glow.

As their car turned a corner passing the old church, the two young men saw a shadow leap out from behind one of the graves and into the road in front of them. Swerving to avoid whatever had landed in the road, the driver slammed his foot on the brake and pulled off onto the side of the narrow road. Wondering what he had almost hit, he craned his head around over his shoulder to see what was in the road.

It was a dog. But not an ordinary dog. This was a dog a tall and as wide as a full-grown man, covered with bristling black fur and baring its massive, yellow teeth. And the animal's eyes were glowing. Not reflecting light like a dog's eyes will do, but actually glowing, burning with a smoldering red light that seemed to have about it something of the very fires of Hell.

The one young man turned to the other and asked "Do you see that?"

"No," his friend replied, "and neither do you."

The animal began to walk towards their parked car. By mutual and unspoken agreement the driver lifted his foot off of the brake and slammed it down on the accelerator. They roared off down the mountain road, taking the hairpin turns and twists of the road and sixty ...seventy...eighty miles an hour.

It was only when the driver looked in the rear view mirror that he realized the dog was still following them.

And keeping up with them.

And even gaining on them.

Panicked, and expecting the jaws of the dog to wrap around the bumper of the car and drag it back into hell, the driver gave one final push on the accelerator, and just as the beast was about to catch them, the car leapt over the bridge the water just below where the streams meet in a cross.

And the dog stopped following them.

Thy watched it fade into the distance and wondered what supernatural law it was that the animal was obliged to obey that kept its territory limited by the boundaries of the water. The two young men drove into Boone and went to the local waffle house, since it was the only place around that was open twenty four hours and they both knew that neither one was going to sleep that night.

A Short Note

This story was told to me some years ago by the man who said he was driving the car that night. I can vouch for him being a generally honest fellow, and all I can add is that whenever I drive by that church in Valle Crucis I always anxiously count the seconds until I reach the bridge.

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Just because you've clawed your way up from the nether regions of Hell, it doesn't mean you don't practice good citizenship, particularly when you're down and out (and diabolical) in 19th Century Burma, where the men were men, the women were women, and the demons have a strong tradition of turning state's evidence in the local courts. While demon on demon crime typically merited a more specialized tribunal, angry spirits could be required to provide testimony in the disputes of mere mortals, and there are records of surprisingly civic-minded devils offering eyewitness statements to the judiciary in order to ensure that the guilty would not go unpunished. A particularly well documented case can be found in the legal proceedings involving a Burmese *Thayai* named Nga Tumbee, his living wife Mi Pu, and the dastardly thief Nga Pay Toe. The recently deceased Nga Tumbee overcame his infernal tendencies, unrequited love, and consequent marital resentment, testifying on behalf of his widowed wife in a court of law.

Burma, which these days is officially called the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, emerged on the historical scene as a Tibeto-Burman enclave in Southeast Asia, made a later splash as the Pagan Empire in the 1050's where its distinctive Burmese language, culture, and strain of Theravada Buddhism reigned supreme only to quickly succumb, like most of Asia, to Mongol invasion. You can try scrubbing and you can try soaking, but still you've got Mongols. This was followed by an impressive 16th-18th Century reunification under the Taungoo Dynasty. Burma became a British colony after three Anglo-Burmese Wars in the 19th Century, declared independence in 1948, and has largely been a military dictatorship ever since. Perhaps it was the influence of Buddhism that mellowed Burmese monsters a bit. Don't get me wrong. They'll still kill or eat you, but by and large they maintain some worldly attachments, sense of justice, and often a vague social conscience. The *Thayai* (or *Thaye*) is technically a version of the pre-Buddhist, animistic *Tasé*, a generic term for disembodied spirits that were once humans. The *Thayai* are the subcategory of angry *Tasé*. "The thayé and thabet are spirits of those who died violent deaths, or of women who died in childbirth, or of those who lived wicked and sinful lives. These spirits are inimical to mankind, and are represented in folk-lore stories as having hideous bodies, as big as those of a giant, and with long, huge, slimy tongues, which they could make use of as the elephant would his trunk. They are bloodthirsty and their special delight is to cause the death of human beings" (Temple, 1991, p9). At the time when the sun had not yet set on the British Empire, the *Thayai* had an established, unsavory reputation, known to "haunt burial grounds, forests, and lonely localities, enter and possesses men, and change them into creatures of ghoul-like habits" (Nisbet, 1901, p162). There is also a close association of the *Thayai* with epidemics of cholera and smallpox, in keeping with their mostly malevolent nature. And oddly, there seems to be a legal record referencing precedents for *Thayai* testimony in the ancient Burmese legal system.

Burmese kingship was pretty much absolute from the get go, but any good despot knows that the day-to-day business of administering a nation has to be delegated. After all, what's the point of being an absolute monarch if you don't have time to hang out with the royal

concubines, count your treasure, or party hard with your aristocratic drinking buddies? Local legal disputes over minor infractions could generally be handled by local village headmen, but every once in a while larger issues emerged that were the province of the "Hloot Taw", or Great Council of State, and to which legal decisions could be appealed.

The Hloot, or Council, as I shall for brevity's sake call it, thus discharges at once the functions of a house of legislature, a cabinet, and a supreme court of justice. It meets literally at the King's Gate, in a building situated in the esplanade or court-yard between the "Red "or main-gate, and the outer gate of the palace enclosure. The various ministers have small offices of their own not far from it, within the same space. The President of the Hloot is nominally the King himself, or in his absence, the Heir-Apparent, or some other member of the Royal Family. Practically, the Prime Minister usually presides. The officers who compose the Council do not seem to be divided by any sharply defined line as superior and ministerial, though their functions suffice to designate them as such (Pilcher, 1882, p305).

Luckily, like most lawyers, who view the smile and a handshake as a legal maneuver and prefer to have things signed and notarized, the Hloot Taw kept a decent record of its proceedings which "contain an immense amount of learned dicta on disputed points of Burmese Law. From the Hloot Taw there was but one appeal, and that was to the King, who through his *Hpone* or glory (the result of previously accumulated merit) possessed powers of life and death over his subjects, animal, human, and even superhuman, such as nats, or spirits, and thayais, or demons. The superhuman subjects sued and were sued at their own tribunals, but when a human being was concerned they were not loath to appear as witnesses in the ordinary courts of the country" (Gyi, 1897, p284). Lower courts (when encountering a curious legal point) would pass up interesting case law for the Hloot Taw to enter into the record. One particularly illustrative occurrence of demon involvement in a legal action was reported in the 19th Century by the Prince of Kyouk Souk, Commander-in-Chief of the Burmese Army, and son of one of the chief ministers who presided at the Hloot Taw.

It all started as an ordinary domestic dispute near the village of Toung Byone in 1885 between a man named Nga Tumbee (a nickname – his real name wasn't preserved) and his bride Mi Pu. Mi Pu was not particularly enamored of Nga Tumbee, and married him only to spite a former boyfriend. Consequently, although Tumbee adored Mi Pu and was utterly devoted to her, she found him prone to embarrassing public displays of affection, fits of jealousy if she even smiled at other men, and annoyingly clingy. Recognizing that despite his shortcomings, Tumbee was an essentially good man, she too was faithful to him, but desperately unhappy. Finally, upon finding Mi Pu innocently conversing with her old lover, Tumbee flew into a jealous rage, haphazardly hurling furniture, which unintentionally struck Mi Pu in the head. Mi Pu, both unjustly accused of adultery and knocked in the noggin with a chair, decided this was the final straw, paid five rupees to the village headman, and was granted a divorce. By Burmese Buddhist law, Mi Pu got to keep the house, the fields, the oxen, the plow, and the cart (all the stuff she brought to the marriage), and she started dating her old lover again. Nga Tumbee was, of course, devastated and hung himself in Mi Pu's barn, unbeknownst to her– a sure recipe for becoming a *Thayai*.

That day a neighbor asked to borrow Mi Pu's cart to take his family to a pagoda feast, to which she assented and directed him to the barn to retrieve it. Awful screaming ensued, at which point the neighbor was discovered with a broken neck, and the body of Nga Tumbee was found hanging from the rafters, having committed suicide some time before the attack on the neighbor. Strangely, the oxen were also missing. Mi Pu railed against the now demonic Nga Tumbee, particularly for stealing her cattle and was terribly frightened when the voice of poor, dead Tumbee protested his innocence in the matter (stealing the oxen, that is – he definitely broke the neighbor's neck to give credit where credit is due). Nga Tumbee directed Mi Pu to the house of a notorious cattle rustler Ko Pay Toe, where she found her oxen. Mi Pu proceeded to lodge a complaint with the local Governor's court, and Ko Pay Toe was brought to trial, but most of the evidence against him was circumstantial. I mean, after all the oxen could have simply wandered onto his property. Since Mi Pu had recovered her property, the magistrates figured hearsay evidence provided by a demon was not enough to convict with and prepared to dismiss the case. Except that Nga Tumbee, undead, but still mindful of his civic duty put in an appearance, calling from outside the court, and declared that it would be a great injustice to throw out the case.

Mi Pu prepared to leave the court, and Nga Pay Toe looked triumphant. But at that moment a voice was heard from outside the court, saying, "That would be very unfair, my lord. A true judge should dispense with evidence and know intuitively truth and untruth. "What son of a dog dares address the Court without permission? Bring him before me immediately," shouted the Governor to the policemen. These went out to look, and soon returned, saying that there was not a soul outside the court. "Who spoke just now?" demanded the Governor, looking round the court. "Your humble slave, Nga Tumbee, my lord," was the reply from the same side of the court. "What have you to say?" "Your humble slave wishes to give evidence in this case, my lord," was the reply. "You are a Thayai, are you not?" "Yes, my lord, your slave unfortunately is." "How is the Court to identify you? What you say may be a trick or those ventriloquists who come from Lower Burma. If you are desirous of substantiating Mi Pu's words, you must come into court in your natural form and be sworn." "Your humble slave is willing to do so, but he is afraid those who see him will die of fright. Will your humble slave's hand be sufficient to identify him?" "Yes, put it on the table, touch the sacred palm-leaf, and take the oath." "Your humble slave will do so. He prays your lordship to request Min Magari to permit him to enter." The Governor took a cigar and a chew of betel, which he offered to Min Magari, and requested the house-hold deity to grant the required permission. When that was done we saw an immense hand about six cubits long, its flesh resembling raw beef that one sees in the bazaars, and covered with huge bristles. The demon gave his evidence, stating that through being an Udaitsa and through his suicide he became a Thayai, attached to the spot where his thoughts in life were centred. He watched over Mi Pu's safety, and saw Nga Pay Toe take away the oxen from the shed, and he followed the thief to find out where he was going to hide the cattle, and also to know where he lived. He would have broken Nga Pay Toe's neck as he did that of the neighbour who tried to borrow the cart in order to swindle Mi Pu, only Nga Pay Toe had a powerful charm which protected him. Nga Pay Toe was a notorious thief—not only did Nga Pay Toe steal the cattle but also the glass tumbler, which was the demon's wedding present to his wife. The ruffian

Nga Pay Toe went with two of his friends to rob in the village of Toungbyme. One of them had a bottle of shamsu (country spirit distilled from rice by Chinamen), but had no cup to drink out of. So when Mi Pu went to the high road to look for her old lover, Nga Pay Toe slipped into her house and stole the glass He was not only a thief but also a great drunkard. The demon, addressing the prisoner, said: "Now, Nga Pay Toe, thief and drunkard, confess." Nga Pay Toe, terribly frightened by the sight of the demon's hand, made a full confession and begged for mercy. The Woon offered the prisoner the choice of paying Mi Pu treble the value of the oxen or of undergoing a long term of slavery in the ruby-mines. The robber adopted the former alternative, and, when he paid over the money to Mi Pu, was discharged. This case, on account of the demon's evidence, was so curious that the Governor sent a full account of it to the Hloot Taw, where it was entered in the records (Gyi, 1897, p285).

Demons need to have a sense of fairness, since frankly if they don't know justice from injustice it makes it awfully hard to concoct elaborate stratagems to corrupt us mortals. Even a demon has to have standards, and they don't necessarily appreciate being blamed for mundane crimes. You don't move up the infernal ladder through mere larceny. That's what imps are for. Real demons go for the big, theatrical Faustian bargains, horrific plagues, and unrestrained debauchery. Stealing livestock is just plain beneath them. Satan has often been sued in court through the years, but finding someone to deliver court documents to Hell is difficult, and he generally refuses to appear anyway, so unless the diabolic reputation of a demon is at stake, you can't usually get him to testify. Those Burmese demons just seem to think that good citizenship shouldn't end with eternal damnation. Demons make fantastic expert witnesses because they traffic in unscrupulous behavior, for as Scottish actor Peter Mullan once said, "Sometimes you have to confront your demons and sometimes even let them loose to genuinely find a place where you can gain some understanding".

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And check your English teacher for the mark of the beast…

Everybody knows demons lie. It's part of the job description. Sort of like politicians. The authorities of the church also assure us that even the garden variety, working imp is a consummate linguist, able to banter conversationally in any language with great fluency, and can often mimic an authentic accent. This is perfectly reasonable in the logic of demonology as it's kind of hard to get mortals to sell their souls if you don't know the lingo, and if you can't perform some extraordinary, unnatural feat, folks are just going to chalk everything up to a pedestrian cause like insanity. That sort of nonsense can ruin a demon's reputation. In fact, it has long been maintained that one of the major clues that someone is demonically possessed (rather than a mere raving loon) is that they suddenly begin rambling on in languages they don't know, correctly answering those annoyingly earnest exorcists in grammatically perfect, albeit offensive Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Aramaic, or whatever language questions are put to them in. If you were to casually peruse the history of demonic exorcism (you know, like on a Thursday afternoon, you're bored…), a curious, but in retrospect obvious, fact emerges. Demons are Grammar Nazis.

In 1620, Mademoiselle Elizabeth de Ranfaing of Lorraine, France, a pious widow notable for eventually (post-exorcism) founding a religious order called The Nuns of the Refuge, "the principal object of which was to withdraw from profligacy the girls or women who had fallen into libertinism" (Mahan, 1855, p94), after rejecting the advances of a physician and reputed black magician named Poviot (who then is said to have resorted to a combination of a little sorcery and the 17th century equivalent of Rohipnol – he was later burned at the stake for his efforts), experienced a "strange derangement" (involuntary spasms, speaking in foreign tongues, impossible knowledge of the secret sins of others) in her health. Several clever physicians could find nothing physically amiss, and referred the case to the Bishop of Toul, presumably requesting he send in the exorcists, as the symptoms they observed were thought to be inexplicable by any other cause than diabolical possession. The usual rip' roarin' Roman Ritual fun ensued, including a wide battery of tests to confirm that Mademoiselle de Ranfaing was indeed possessed. A relatively learned and prominent crowd showed up for the exorcism, including the exorcists M. Viardin, a doctor of divinity, counselor of the Duke of Lorraine, a Jesuit and capuchin; the Bishop of Tripoli, suffragan of Strasburg; M. de Sancy, formerly ambassador from the king at Constantinople; priest of the Oratoire, Charles de Lorraine, Bishop of Verdun, and two doctors of the Sorbonne educated in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. And they set about trying to trip the possessing demon up and cast him out, conducting interrogations in a wide variety of languages, sometimes combining multiple languages in a single sentence, to which Mademoiselle de Ranfaing (or her

possessing demon) responded in kind. Eventually, the infernal intruder was exorcised, but not without correcting the grammar of its inquisitors.

The Sieur Gamier, a doctor of the Sorbonne, having also given her several commands in Hebrew, she replied pertinently, but in French, saying that the compact was made that he should speak only in the usual tongue. The demon added, "Is it not enough that I show thee that I understand what thou sayest?" The same M. Gamier, speaking to him in Greek, inadvertently put one case for another; the possessed, or rather the devil, said to him, "Thou hast committed an error." The doctor said to him in Greek, "Point out my fault;" the devil replied, "Let it suffice thee that I point out an error; I shall tell thee no more concerning it." The doctor telling him in Greek to hold his tongue, he answered, "Thou commandest me to hold my tongue, and I will not do so" (Calmet, p166).

During a 1632-1638 epidemic of possession of Ursuline nuns at a convent of Loudun in Poitou-Charentes region of western France, it became necessary to exorcise the Mother Abbess, who's demon clearly had a better grasp of Latin syntax than his exorcists, who mocked an apparent grammatical error on the part of the devil, that is, until the lead exorcist Father Barre pointed out that technically, while undoubtedly diabolical, the possessing demon was actually syntactically correct.

After the demon, through the organs of the Abbess, had replied to Father Barre "Adoro te," the father asked her "Quem adoras" and repeated this question several times: the answer was "Jesus Christus." Whereupon a bystander, Daniel Drouin, assessor to the provost, could not forbear saying somewhat aloud, "Here is a devil who does not understand concord." The exorcist then changed the phraseology of the question, saying, " Quis est iste quem adoras?" expecting she would answer giving the name in the same case as before; but she answered, "Jesu Christe:" upon which many present said, " This is bad Latin." But Father Barre came to the rescue of the devil's Latinity, and maintained she had said, "Adoro te, Jesu Christe," as an ejaculation, "I adore thee, O Jesus Christ!" If there had been as much pains taken to defend the accused priest's cause and life as there was anxiety shown to defend the demon from a sin against the rules of syntax, humanity would have been saved a great outrage, and the Cardinal Richelieu and his agents a great crime (Madden, 1857, p295).

Demons may be out to steal your soul, but they are obviously sticklers for good grammar, regardless of the language the xenoglossolalia manifests in. While I've long suspected my sixth grade English teacher was in league with the forces of darkness, I had no concrete evidence until researching the subject. Just remember that the next time some insufferable clod points out your incorrect usage of the Oxford comma, they are simply trying to display a superior command of grammar, but that doesn't necessarily mean that they aren't pure evil, and remind them, as Renaissance essayist Michel de Montaigne said, "The greater part of the world's troubles are due to questions of grammar". Plus, if you sign a pact with the Devil, make sure you copy edit. That's not the sort of thing you want returned to you covered in proofreading marks.

Reference

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Blog at WordPress.com . The Chateau Theme .

Devil's Rock is said to hold the footprint of Satan himself. Located off State Road 1131 in Largo, the print of a left foot is slightly larger than human size and imprinted deep in the rock.

How did The Devil's footprint get in a rock in North Carolina? This is one North Carolina legend that starts in Flat Rock, South Carolina, where the Devil's matching right footprint can be found.

Some time in the last century, there was a man in Flat Rock who was reported to be one of the meanest men ever to walk the Earth. This man spent his time brawling, drinking, cussing, and racking up a list of sins so long that if you wrote them all out the paper would stretch for miles.

Now, this man grew old, as we all do, and nearing the end he looked back on his life and knew where he was headed, and he was pretty sure he didn't want to go there. But the man was such a mean-spirited cuss that Heaven didn't look like much fun to him either. So he set out a plan to avoid going to either place.

When he knew his time was drawing near, the man went out and bought a bunch of the sharpest tacks he could find. He then went up onto the rock from which Flat Rock gets his name, spread these tacks around, covered them with old leaves, sat down, and waited.

Soon enough The Devil appeared before him, come to carry his soul away to the fiery pits below.

"You ready to go?" The Devil asked him.

"I am," said the man, "But before I do I'd light to get a good look at you. I've been on your side this whole life. I've heard so much about how magnificent you are to look at. I know that you're a busy man. And when I'm down in your place I won't get much of a chance to see you, there being so many wicked people up here needing your attention, so if you could kindly step back a bit so I can take you all in, I'd much appreciate it. It'd be the best reward I can think of in this evil life I've led."

Now, the Devil is a vain creature, and he ate this flattery right up. He puffed himself up and stepped back to show off, and stepped right on to those tacks laying on the ground.

The Devil hollered and jumped up in the air. He pushed down so hard with his right foot that he left his right footprint in that rock in South Carolina. He went up so high that, when he came down he landed on that rock one state above in North Carolina and forced his left footprint into that rock in Largo.

After that, Satan was too scared to have that man, and Heaven wouldn't have him, either. So now his ghost walks the Earth, up and down between those two footprints, laughing to himself

all the while.

How to Get There

The rock is still there, but unfortunately a force greater than the Prince of Darkness himself has reduced its glory. The Department of Transportation dynamited most of Devil's Rock to build a new road, so there's very little left of the footprint to see.

Devil's Rock is located in Largo, which is about an hour North of Raleigh between 401 and US 1.

The rock itself can be found in a field off of State Road 1131. Once you reach SR 1131, look for a sign that says *Devil's Rock* hanging off a mailbox on the left.

Devil's Rock is on Private Property. The land is owned by a very nice man named Mr. Harris who is generally obliging, but please ask permission before going to see it.

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Diamond worth £12,000 shot into space has landed back and been found by dog walker

mirror.co.uk

- Dec 29, 2014 20:17
- By Stian Alexander

Gem: Allan Bell, Rosie and the diamond

A diamond worth £12,000 which was shot into space more than four months ago has eventually been found under a hedge...by a man out walking his dogs.

The diamond was hand-picked for its 'brilliance and sparkle' and is a 'modified cushion brilliant cut', similar to the engagement rings of Kim Kardashian and Jessica Biel.

Stian Alexander

Allan Bell, 75, was out walking his two dogs, springer spaniel Rosie and Dylan, a Saluki cross, along a country path in the village of Brattleby, Lincs, when Rosie 'got scent of something' and shot under a hedge.

Mr Bell, a retired lorry driver, said Rosie was 'scrabbling about' for 10 minutes before dragging a package - attached to a limp orange parachute - out of the hedgerow on December 23.

The diamond floated up to the edge of space - around 100,000ft - in a helium balloon as part of a PR stunt by online diamond retailer 77 Diamonds on August 7.

The plan was for the balloon to pop at the edge of space, where the sky turns dark, sending the sparkler parachuting back down to earth, with the lucky finder allowed to keep the £12,000 diamond.

But as the gem parachuted back to earth the GPS signal was momentarily lost and the gem 'vanished' - with nobody on the ground spotting where it had landed.

Mr Bell - who celebrated his silver wedding anniversary with wife Pat this year - said he had seen reports on TV about the missing £12,000 sparkler and had 'kept his eyes out for it' since August during his daily dog walks.

He said: "As soon as I heard about this diamond landing around these parts I kept my eyes out for it - but never in a moment did I think I would ever find it.

He said he got home to wife Pat, a 59-year-old retired customer services worker, and the pair opened it up to find the gem inside, along with a number to call.

Pat called bosses at 77 Diamonds, telling them her husband had found the missing sparkler under a hedge.

She was congratulated on the find, but has yet to decide on whether to have the 1.14 carat diamond set in a ring or sell it.

She said she and her husband would 'probably' sell the diamond and go on a Mediterranean cruise to celebrate their silver wedding anniversary.

Allan, who worked as a lorry driver for 44 years, said Rosie - and Dylan - would be getting a special treat, adding: "Both the dogs will get something special.

"I imagine a rib-eye steak would go down well - it's the least they deserve."

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Divers: We've Got 'Holy Grail' of Shipwrecks

La Salle's Griffin was lost in Lake Michigan 335 years ago

By Rob Quinn, Newser Staff
Posted Dec 24, 2014 3:13 AM CST

(Newser) – There are thousands of shipwrecks at the bottom of the Great Lakes, but one of the very first full-sized ships to go down has been one of the hardest to find. The Griffin, built by French explorer Robert de la Salle, sank in Lake Michigan in 1679 and divers Kevin Dykstra and Frederick Monroe say they are sure they have finally found it. The pair tell WZZM13 that they spotted the wreck in 2011, but waited until now to reveal the discovery of what some call the "holy grail" of Great Lakes shipwrecks while they consulted experts. There are "no cables, no cabin, and no smokestacks," no mechanical devices of any kind, and a carving on the front of the ship strongly resembles 17th-century French carvings of griffins, Dykstra says.

Dykstra says the pair weren't even looking for the elusive wreck, but were on the trail of $2 million in Confederate gold coins believed to have been in a box car pushed off a ferry to save it from sinking during a severe storm in the late 1800s. "We found the mystery ship, the Griffin; now we're going to find the gold," he says. Another wreck hunter, however, said earlier this year that he was "99.9% sure" he had found the remains of the Griffin. Since 1981, Steve Libert has spent more than $1 million and made more than 1,000 dives searching for the wreck, according to a *New York Times* profile last year. (A sunken ship with a somewhat tragic story attached was found in Lake Superior in August.)

Divers inspect a hole being dug beside a wooden beam jutting from the floor of Lake Michigan during a search for the Griffin.

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Dog Shoots Man

Andres Jauregui Become a fan

huffingtonpost.com

Posted: 12/18/2014 12:36 pm EST Updated: 12/18/2014 1:59 pm EST

Stop trying to teach your old dog new tricks, and teach yourself some gun safety!

A Wyoming man is recovering in the hospital after his dog accidentally shot him. In a phone interview on Thursday, Johnson County Sheriff Steve Kozisek confirmed that Richard L. Fipps, 46, was hospitalized Monday after his dog stepped on a loaded rifle in the bed of his pickup truck and accidentally fired it. The rifle's safety was off, Kozisek said.

According to Big Horn Mountain Radio, Fipps was removing snow chains from his truck when he was shot in the left arm.

"The rifle was loaded and in the bed of the truck [with some other gear], and the dog hopped up there and either stepped on it or caused something to move and set it off," Kozisek told the Huffington Post.

Fipps transported to Sheridan Memorial Hospital via ambulance. His condition was not released, but his injuries were not life threatening, according to Big Horn Mountain Radio.

Kozisek said that the accident could have easily been prevented, had the gun not been loaded.

"Carrying a loaded rifle in a truck is never a good idea, safety on or safety off," Kozisek said.

The sheriff, who has worked in law enforcement for 42 years, said he'd never seen a case where a dog shot a man. However, it has happened before -- in Florida.

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Dogs in Heaven? Pope Francis Leaves Pearly Gates Open

nytimes.com

Pope Francis has given hope to gays, unmarried couples and advocates of the Big Bang theory. Now, he has endeared himself to dog lovers, animal rights activists and vegans.

Trying to console a distraught little boy whose dog had died, Francis told him in a recent public appearance on St. Peter's Square, "Paradise is open to all of God's creatures." While it is unclear whether the pope's remarks helped soothe the child, they were welcomed by groups like the Humane Society of the United States and People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, who saw them as a repudiation of conservative Roman Catholic theology that says animals cannot go to heaven because they have no souls.

"My inbox got flooded," said Christine Gutleben, senior director of faith outreach at the Humane Society, the largest animal protection group in the United States. "Almost immediately, everybody was talking about it."

Charles Camosy, an author and professor of Christian ethics at Fordham University, said it was difficult to know precisely what Francis meant, since he spoke "in pastoral language that is not really meant to be dissected by academics." But asked if the remarks had caused a new debate on whether animals have souls, suffer and go to heaven, Mr. Camosy said, "In a word: absolutely."

In his relatively short tenure as leader of the world's one billion Roman Catholics since taking over from Benedict XVI, Francis, 77, has repeatedly caused a stir among conservatives in the church. He has suggested more lenient positions than his predecessor on issues like homosexuality, single motherhood and unwed couples. So to some extent, it was not a surprise that Francis, an Argentine Jesuit who took his papal name from St. Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of animals, would suggest to a saddened child that his lost pet had a place in the afterlife.

Citing biblical passages that assert that animals not only go to heaven, but get along with one another when they get there, Francis was quoted by the Italian news media as saying: "One day, we will see our animals again in the eternity of Christ. Paradise is open to all of God's creatures."

Theologians cautioned that Francis had spoken casually, not made a doctrinal statement.

The Rev. James Martin, a Jesuit priest and editor at large of America, the Catholic magazine, said he believed that Francis was at least asserting that "God loves and Christ redeems all of

creation," even though conservative theologians have said paradise is not for animals.

"He said paradise is open to all creatures," Father Martin said. "That sounds pretty clear to me."

The question of whether animals go to heaven has been debated for much of the church's history. Pope Pius IX, who led the church from 1846 to 1878, longer than any other pope, strongly supported the doctrine that dogs and other animals have no consciousness. He even sought to thwart the founding of an Italian chapter of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

Pope John Paul II appeared to reverse Pius in 1990 when he proclaimed that animals do have souls and are "as near to God as men are." But the Vatican did not widely publicize his assertion, perhaps because it so directly contradicted Pius, who was the first to declare the doctrine of papal infallibility in 1854.

John Paul's successor, Benedict, seemed to emphatically reject his view in a 2008 sermon in which he asserted that when an animal dies, it "just means the end of existence on earth."

Ms. Gutleben of the Humane Society said Francis' apparent reversal of Benedict's view could be enormous. "If the pope did mean that all animals go to heaven, then the implication is that animals have a soul," she said. "And if that's true, then we ought to seriously consider how we treat them. We have to admit that these are sentient beings, and they mean something to God."

Sarah Withrow King, director of Christian outreach and engagement at PETA, one of the most activist anti-slaughterhouse groups, said the pope's remarks vindicated the biblical portrayal of heaven as peaceful and loving, and could influence eating habits, moving Catholics away from consuming meat — which she asserted had already been happening anyway. "It's a vegan world, life over death and peace between species," she said. "I'm not a Catholic historian, but PETA's motto is that animals aren't ours, and Christians agree. Animals aren't ours, they're God's."

Whether the pope's remarks will prove to be a persuasive new reason not to eat meat, a potentially worrisome development to the multibillion-dollar beef, pork, poultry and seafood industries, remains unclear at best. But they did cause discussion.

"As on quite a few other things Pope Francis has said, his recent comments on all animals going to heaven have been misinterpreted," Dave Warner, a spokesman for the National Pork Producers Council, said in an email. "They certainly do not mean that slaughtering and eating animals is a sin." Mr. Warner quoted passages from Genesis that say man is given "dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on earth."

"While that 'dominion' means use for human benefit, it also requires stewardship — humane care and feeding — something all farmers who raise animals practice every day of every year," Mr. Warner said.

Father Martin said he did not believe the pope's remarks could be construed as a comment on vegetarianism. But, he said, "he's reminding us that all creation is holy and that in his mind, paradise is open to all creatures, and frankly, I agree with him."

Laura Hobgood-Oster, professor of religion and environmental studies at Southwestern University in Georgetown, Tex., and an expert on the history of dog-human interaction, said she believed that there would be a backlash from religious conservatives, but that it would take time.

"The Catholic Church has never been clear on this question; it's all over the place, because it begs so many other questions," she said. "Where do mosquitoes go, for God's sake?"

Correction: December 12, 2014

An earlier version of this article referred incompletely to the largest animal protection group in the United States. It is the Humane Society of the United States, not just the Humane Society.

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Doh! Duped by a Simpson

stuff.co.nz

RACHEL FELTMAN
Last updated 10:20, December 10 2014

A pair of scientific journals accepted a nonsense paper from a made-up university with author names borrowed from The Simpsons TV show.

Whoops.

Other science journals have been duped by dummy papers. Last month we wrote about "Get me off Your F**king Mailing List," a riveting piece of scientific literature accidentally submitted to (and unexpectedly accepted by) a pay-for-play journal.

But the Simpson-themed bogus paper was submitted on purpose, Vox reports, in the hope of trapping a bad science journal in the act.

Journals are meant to use a system called peer review - where scientists read each other's papers to see if they seem reasonable - to vet the articles they consider for publication.

But in the age of the internet, there are lots of publications that forgo peer review - even if they claim to have rigorous standards. And some of these journals spam scientists, essentially offering to publish anything they send in for a fee.

Unlike the mailing list paper, this one isn't just a series of expletives. A quick skim wouldn't give the study away as false. But a cursory read (and a quick Googling of the authors) would do so immediately. The opening summary of the paper reads:

"The Ethernet must work. In this paper, we confirm the improvement of e-commerce. WEKAU, our new methodology for forward-error correction, is the solution to all of these challenges."

You don't have to be an expert in ethernet connections or e-commerce to know that those are just a bunch of words strung together (in fact, it was created using a random text generator). And you don't need to be a TV junkie to know that Maggie Simpson is a cartoon character.

And also a baby.

"I wanted first and foremost to come up with something that gives out the fake immediately," the actual author of the paper, Alex Smolyanitsky, told Vox. "My only regret is that the second author isn't Ralph Wiggum."

- The Washington Post

Comments

JohnnyMax
Whether it is pseudoscience, 'science', dieting, health, religion, etc, etc there are weird

theories that get published and suckers believe. Paleo diets, flat earth, if you can publish it (and it doesn't have to be in a "reputable" publication) there will be believers. The internet and ease of web-publishing has a lot to answer for.
silent_bob
If you read Nature recently you would know that journals request that authors suggest reviewers but some authors are suggesting false names that use generic email address (e.g. hotmail, gmail) and are friends, relatives or even themselves. This was spotted recently because reviews were coming back within 24 hours and strongly endorsed the paper. This might be what happened with the "Maggie Simpson" paper. So much for peer-reviewed papers having credibility.
MikeCC
No it isn't what happened wit this paper, and that is not "peer review" either.

r2b2
The lack of peer review can't really be excused but I'm assuming that people do realise that there are probably real people called Maggie Simpson right?
zemilith
Exactly my thought, how many Maggie Simpson's are there in the world? Quite a few I imagine
ScottJ
The authors were Maggie Simpson and Edna Krabappel according to the summary on the Stuff front page. Doesn't seem to have made it into the actual article though.
Alan_Wilkinson
And the names of the duped journals were?
ElJorge
Dunno but probably the ones that 'climate scientists' submit to.....
MikeCC
The "science" journals that accepted the work were the Journal of Computational Intelligence and Electronic Systems and the Aperito Journal of NanoScience Technology.

these are not so much science as scams - they are a predatory species that preys on scientists' need to "publish or die".

Calling them science journals is a disservice to the human race, and probably false advertising on their part!
mal2
It's a shame this article attempts to disparage all scientific journals regardless of their robust review processes and lump them in with these scam journals.
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Earhart-Searcher Ric Gillespie Is DNews Person of the Year

Dec 31, 2014 07:00 AM ET // Rossella Lorenzi

Ric Gillespie, leader of TIGHAR, holds the aluminum panel, found on a remote Pacific island, that his group believes could have been a patch on Amelia Earhart's plane.

New research suggests that a piece of aluminum aircraft debris recovered in 1991 from Nikumaroro, an uninhabited atoll in the southwestern Pacific republic of Kiribati, does belong to Earhart's twin-engined Lockheed "Electra." READ MORE: Amelia Earhart Plane Fragment Identified

TIGHAR

According to researchers at The International Group for Historic Aircraft Recovery (TIGHAR), which has long been investigating the last, fateful flight taken by Earhart 77 years ago, the aluminum sheet is a patch of metal installed on the Electra during the aviator's eight-day stay in Miami, which was the fourth stop on her attempt to circumnavigate the globe. The patch replaced a navigational window -- a Miami Herald photo shows the Electra departing for San Juan, Puerto Rico on the morning of Tuesday, June 1, 1937 with a shiny patch of metal where the window had been.

TIGHAR

Forensic imaging of photos of the patch show that its borders were roughly the same as the window frame

it replaced.

TIGHAR

TIGHAR researchers went to Wichita Air Services in Newton, Kansas and compared the dimensions and features of the Artifact 2-2-V-1, as the metal sheet found on Nikumaroro was called, with the structural components of a Lockheed Electra being restored to airworthy condition. The rivet pattern and other features on the 19-inch-wide by 23-inch-long Nikumaroro artifact matched the patch and lined up with the structural components of the Lockheed Electra.

TIGHAR

The new research on Artifact 2-2-V-1 may reinforce the possibility that a sonar anomaly detected at a depth of 600 feet off Nikumaroro during TIGHAR's last expedition is the rest of the aircraft. The image shows the sonar anomaly (left) and a reconstruction showing the anomaly possibly being Earhart's plane (right). READ MORE: Amelia Earhart Plane Fragment Identified

TIGHAR

Aviation researcher Richard Gillespie has spent decades investigating one of the 20th century's most enduring mysteries: the fate of American aviator Amelia Earhart, who vanished over the Pacific 77 years ago trying to circumnavigate the globe.

On October 28, Gillespie announced that a piece of aircraft debris found by his team on a remote Pacific island is, with a high degree of certainty, the first physical evidence of Earhart's plane.

Because of his recent breakthrough and ongoing pursuit to understand the fate of the lost heroine of U.S. aviation, Discovery News is proud to announce that Gillespie has been

selected as DNews Person of the Year.

Photos: Where Amelia Earhart Plane Fragment Came From

The search for Amelia Earhart is about to continue in the pristine waters of a tiny uninhabited island, Nikumaroro, between Hawaii and Australia.

It was about midnight Italian time when, less than two months ago, I received an email from Ric Gillespie describing his most recent findings in the quest for Amelia Earhart.

He was telling me that a fragment of Amelia Earhart's lost aircraft was identified for the first time ever since her plane vanished over the Pacific Ocean on July 2, 1937, in a record attempt to fly around the world at the equator.

I've been following Gillespie's efforts for years now, reporting on his investigations across a range of artifacts, radio logs, photographic and sonar data. But as I read his email and the attached research paper that night, I realized it was definitely worth losing some sleep.

Some hours after DNews broke the story, Gillespie's findings were making the headlines around the world.

For the first time an artifact recovered from Nikumaroro, an uninhabited atoll in the southwestern Pacific republic of Kiribati, was directly linked to the last, fateful flight taken by Earhart 77 years ago.

The 19-inch by 23-inch piece of aluminum, found in 1991 by researchers of The International Group for Historic Aircraft Recovery (TIGHAR), was identified as the patch installed to replace a window on Earhart's Lockheed Electra aircraft during her stop in Miami at the beginning of her second world flight attempt.

Amelia Earhart's Disappearance: The Answer in Photos

The identification was made possible after TIGHAR researchers noted that a photograph from The Miami Herald, dated July 1, 1937, showed the Electra with a shiny patch of metal covering the hole where a navigational window had been removed.

Five independent forensic analysts researchers at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in Cambridge, Massachusetts, have recently reviewed TIGHAR's research.

"We examined the rivet holes, the fractures, the edges of the sheet and the presence of corrosion on the sample both visually and with aided magnification," Thomas Eagar, professor of Materials Engineering and Engineering Systems, stated.

According to Eagar, the size of the sample and the pattern of the holes as compared to a Lockheed Electra aircraft structure make a very strong case for the piece being the patch of

Earhart's plane.

"The preponderance of the evidence indicates that you have a true Amelia Earhart artifact," he concluded.

The breakthrough would prove that, contrary to what was generally believed, Earhart and her navigator, Fred Noonan, did not crash in the Pacific Ocean, running out of fuel somewhere near their target destination of Howland Island.

Instead, they made a forced landing on the smooth, flat coral reef of Nikumaroro, at the time called Gardner Island. The two became castaways and eventually died on the atoll, which is some 350 miles southeast of Howland Island.

Photos: Jars Hint at Amelia Earhart as Castaway

"That battered hunk of aluminum is a Rosetta Stone of information that, until recently, we were not able to read. For twenty-three years we struggled to unlock its secrets," Gillespie told me.

The son of a decorated World War Two pilot and a former aviation accident investigator, Gillespie grew up around airplanes and learned to fly while he was still in high school.

Although he has led over three dozen aviation archaeological expeditions to remote areas of the United States, Canada, Europe, Micronesia and New Guinea with his organization TIGHAR, which he founded with his wife Pat Thrasher in 1985, Gillespie's name remains most closely associated with the search for Amelia.

His book, "Finding Amelia: The True Story of the Earhart Disappearance," published in 2006, is considered the most authoritative work on the subject.

"When we decided to mount an expedition to Gardner island in 1989 to see if there was any sign that Earhart may have landed there, we naively thought it would be a simple question of whether the airplane was there or not. Twenty-six years later, we understand that the question is not simple," Gillespie said.

Considered the holy grail of aviation archaeology, the search for Amelia has kept the world guessing ever since the tall, slender, blonde pilot took her last flight off into legend.

Theories proliferated that she was a spy, that she was captured by the Japanese, that she died in a prisoner-of-war camp, and even that she survived and returned to live her life as a New Jersey housewife.

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Eggs-traordinary! Woman cracks FOUR double yolker eggs in breakfast pan

mirror.co.uk

- Dec 31, 2014 18:34
- By Alisha Rouse

Michelle Fiddler was more likely to win the Lottery than discover the four double yolked eggs in a half dozen box

Liverpool Echo

Eggsellent: Michelle Fiddler bought a box of free range eggs from Tesco and four turned out to be double yolkers

A woman had an eggs-traordinary surprise by defying one in a BILLION odds to crack FOUR double yolker eggs in her breakfast pan.

In fact Michelle Fiddler, from Liverpool, was more likely to win the National Lottery - with chances of one in 14 million - than to discover the four double yolks in a half dozen box.

Michelle told the Liverpool Echo: “It was a Sunday morning and I was making poached eggs for breakfast for me and my other half, and we were down to the last four free range eggs in the pack.

“The other two eggs had been normal - so it was just chance it was these four left.

“I’ve had the odd double yolker before but nothing like this.”

She took a photo of the eggs - which proved a hit with Facebook and Twitter friends.

Michelle added: “I was surprised, but when it went online and my friends commented, I realised quite how amazing it was.

“Though to be honest I would rather have won the lottery.”

Despite the huge odds, some yolk enthusiasts insist that it isn’t that unlikely- as eggs are sorted according to size, meaning heavy double yolk eggs will get put in the same area.

However, a spokesman for the British Egg Information Service said: "The double yolks tend to come from younger chickens whose hormone systems are not fully developed yet. The chances of getting a double yolk are estimated to be less than one in a thousand, so this is pretty rare."

And the Information Service says that eggs are a 'cracking' hangover cure, as the amino acid found in eggs helps to counteract the poisonous effects of chemicals produced by alcohol.

He added: "Egg yolks contain all kinds of vitamins and minerals, and studies recently showed they contain more nutritional value – for example more vitamin B – than was previously thought."

It's a great time to consider getting the eggs in, with more than a few sore heads predicted for New Year's Day."

Things more likely to happen

Michelle had a one in a billion chance of her eggy-discovery, here's some things that were more likely to happen:

- Win the lottery

- Have identical quadruplets

- Visit A&E for a pogo stick related injury

- Be struck by lightning

- Become Prime Minister

- Be attacked by a shark

- Hitting a hole-in-one on two consecutive, par-3 holes

- Be born with an extra finger and toe

- Get a royal flush in a first hand of poker

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Égig érő fa

The **égig érő fa** ("sky-high tree"), also called **életfa** ("tree of life"), **világfa** ("world tree"), or **tetejetlen fa** ("tree without a top"), is an element of Hungarian shamanism and native faith, and a typical element of Hungarian folk art and folk tales, and also a distinct folk tale type.

Several of these tales have versions in the Transylvanian, German, Romanian, Romani, Serbian, Croatian, Bulgarian, Turkish and other cultures in Asia, but the origin of the Hungarian tales goes back to the táltos traditions of Hungarians. The "táltosok" (shamans) are the humans who are entitled to climb up the *égig érő fa* and wander in the seven or nine layers of the sky.

One version of these tale is about the "kiskondás" (small swineherd) who climbs up the tree to save the princess who is held captive by a dragon (as told in the Világhírű Szép Miklós tale). The tree is a frequent element of certain funny tales, in which for example a gypsy climbs up into the heaven and then down into the hell.

The world tree often grows out of a reindeer or a horse. It often carries among its branches the Sun and the Moon. This latter concept is typical of Uralic and Siberian people. The tree often stands on the *world mountain*, with its top in the sky and its roots in hell, where snakes and toads live. In the tales birds often sit on the tree, for example eagles, hawks or the mythical Hungarian bird, the *turul*.

Retrieved from "http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Égig_érő_fa&oldid=634389658"

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Eight million dog mummies found in Saqqara Eight million dog mummies were uncovered at the dog catacomb in Saqqara

Nevine El-Aref , Wednesday 2 Jan 2013

Friday, 19 December 2014

ahram.org.eg

During routine excavations at the dog catacomb in Saqqara necropolis, an excavation team led by Salima Ikram, professor of Egyptology at The American University in Cairo (AUC), and an international team of researchers led by Paul Nicholson of Cardiff University have uncovered almost 8 million animal mummies at the burial site.

Studies on their bones revealed that those dogs are from different breeds but not accurately identified yet.

“We are recording the animal bones and the mummification techniques used to prepare the animals,” Ikram said.

Studies on the mummies, Ikram explains, revealed that some of them were old while the majority were buried hours after their birth. She said that the mummified animals were not limited to canines but there are cat and mongoose remains in the deposit.

“We are trying to understand how this fits religiously with the cult of Anubis, to whom the catacomb is dedicated,” she added.

Ikram also told National Geographic, which is financing the project, that “in some churches people light a candle, and their prayer is taken directly up to God in that smoke. In the same way, a mummified dog's spirit would carry a person's prayer to the afterlife”.

Saqqara dog catacomb was first discovered in 1897 when well-known French Egyptologist Jacques De Morgan published his Carte of Memphite necropolis, with his map showing that there are two dog catacombs in the area.

However, mystery has overshadowed such mapping as it was not clear who was the first to discover the catacombs nor who carried out the mapping, and whether they were really for dogs.

“The proximity of the catacombs to the nearby temple of Anubis, the so called jackal or dog-headed deity associated with cemeteries and embalming makes it likely that these catacombs are indeed for canines and their presence at Saqqara is to be explained by the concentration of other animal cuts at the site,” Nicholson wrote on his website.

“These other cults include the burials of, and temples for, bulls, cows, baboons, ibises, hawks and cats all of which were thought to act as intermediaries between humans and their gods.”

Despite the great quantity of animals buried in these catacombs and the immense size of the underground burial places, Egyptologists have focused on the temples and on inscriptional evidence rather than on the animals themselves and their places of burial.

The mysteries behind De Morgan's mapping were unsolved until 2009 when this team started concrete excavations at the cemetery in an attempt to learn more about the archaeological and history of the site.

"Results at the first season showed that De Morgan map has substantial inaccuracies and a new survey is under way," Nicholson said.

"The animal bones themselves have been sampled and preliminary results suggest that as well as actual dogs there may be other canids present. Furthermore the age profile of the animals is being examined so that patterns of mortality can be ascertained."

Nathan
14-06-2013 12:44pm
I wonder in what timespan these dogs where placed there. 8 million seems a bit much.
John
29-01-2013 05:24pm
Silliness of religion
This just shows the silliness of religion. Hopefully, someday we'll evolve out of our primitive need to worship some type of deity.
Anki Hagberg
14-01-2013 07:49pm
Are the numbers correct?
8 million dogs sound very, very much. Is that really a correct statement?
david
09-01-2013 04:29pm
crap
one of the worst sca articles i've read... 8 mil dogs found!... in 1897...
Saxon de Kock
09-01-2013 09:48am
How fascinating to learn about this new discovery of such an immense burial place for millions of dog mummies. Clearly in the pharaonic era, Egyptians valued their animals to the extent of mummifying them in the hopes of a direct line of communication to their God. It remains a sad fact that in Egypt today, dogs are not cared for nor valued at all in spite of being called 'Man's best friend' - certainly something the ancients agreed with.
Adam
28-04-2013 04:27am
agreed
agree with you that a huge portion of the population in Egypt disregard and disrespect the most perfect of Creatures on this planet. We would do wisely as a species to learn the value of love, forgiveness, faithfulness and loyalty from humble dogs. but Alas, the cruelty of human beings is astounding... the ancients did value life more than we do today. and yet we mock them. and yet they attained greatness despite primitive means without our so called 'amazing technology"!!

Woden
09-01-2013 03:24am

What's for dinner Mummy?
So many in one spot? Either sacrifice to the Gods or they were eaten to take the spirit of the Gods within oneself. Dogs are eaten to this day around the world. (mostly Asia who Egypt traded with)
Sarah Mangan
07-01-2013 11:21pm
Dog Mummies and how they fit in
As in today's society dogs are often pampered poochs ,there are still millions who have to be put down for a lack of homes, in a society that actually worshipped them ,how would they have dealt withthe inevietable problem of unwanted pets, may be the people who cared the most tried to find them homes but when they couldn't the treated them with the respect their beliefs would have called for , the respectful disposal of their remains. They worshiped them,I don't believe the past therories I have heard about the cats that they had them there to be sold to be sacrificed to a temple . More likely they loved them and tried to keep them alive. These ages are like the ages of animals that are disposed of today. As well as with the cats, they are generally a little older before people give them up to be destroyed, kittens are awfully cute,cats to some not so much.With puppies breeders often breed just to get enough to perpetuate aline they are trying to develope and kill the rest. I don't thi
billy
05-01-2013 07:41pm
dogs
anyone thaught that this might be a way for ordinary people to gain imortality after all ot all off the people could afford to be mummyfied most would most likely be cremated soon after death and these offerings would be offered in there place
ALAN FISCHER, SR.
04-01-2013 02:49pm
ANNIMALS
HOW WERE THE ANIMALS DISPATCHED
Kevin
04-01-2013 07:11pm
They were...
They were fed some falafel from a street vendor.

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In the 1800's Texas was a wild and lawless place attracting all manner of thieves, murderers, and other ruthless outlaws. To combat these many desperadoes and fight the Indians, who were prone to attacking the white settlers, in rode the Texas Rangers, who set about in taming the wild Texas frontier.

The Rio Grande River to the south had been declared the border between the United States and Mexico; however, the Mexican government refused to recognize the boundary, insisting instead, that the Nueces River was the border. This left a giant chunk of land between the two rivers which became known as "No Man's Land" and a prime target for outlaws.

The dispute between the two countries finally forced the United States to go to war with Mexico in 1846 to make the Rio Grande the official border. However, it would take another thirty years before the Texas Rangers could rid the territory of the Mexican cattle rustlers and thieves.

The Texas Rangers, a roving posse of expert gunmen, were not men to be messed with. Following their adversaries everywhere, they lived out of the saddle and often dispensed justice brutally. Two of these men were Creed Taylor and William Alexander Anderson "Big Foot" Wallace, who was himself a folk hero. It was Big Foot, with Creed's blessing, who unwittingly created *El Muerto*.

In 1850, a man known simply as Vidal was busy rustling cattle all over South Texas and soon he had a high price on his head – "dead or alive." During that summer, Vidal took advantage of a Comanche raid which pulled most of the men northward to fight off the attack. In the meantime, the sparse settlements were temporarily left unguarded. Vidal, along with three of his henchmen, wasted no time in taking advantage of the situation and gathered up a considerable number of horses on the San Antonio River, heading southwest toward Mexico.

What Vidal didn't know was that, among the stolen herd, were several prized mustangs belonging to Texas Ranger Creed Taylor="margin-top:>

Taylor had enough and quickly gathered fellow ranger, Big Foot Wallace, and a nearby rancher by the name of Flores. Both Wallace and Taylor were as skilled as any Comanche when tracking and the three men shortly found the trail of Vidal and his henchmen.

When the three men found the outlaw camp, they waited until night when the bandits were sleeping to attack. Catching them unaware the thieves were killed. But just killing them was not enough. Taylor and Wallace wanted to set an example that would deter future bandits. In those days, stealing cattle and horses was a crime more serious than murder. The Rangers had tried all types of brutal justice including stringing them up in trees and left hanging, shooting them and chopping them to pieces, leaving their bodies for animal bait. But nothing had worked to stop the outlaws.

In a dramatic example of frontier justice, Wallace beheaded Vidal then lashed him firmly into a saddle on the back of a wild mustang. Tying the outlaw's hands to the pommel and securing the torso to hold him upright, Big Foot then attached Vidal's head and sombrero to the saddle with a long strip of rawhide. He then turned the bucking horse loose to wander the Texas hills with its terrible burden on his back.

Soon, stories began to abound about the headless rider seen usually in remote country, with its sombreroed head swinging back and forth to the rhythm of horse's gallop.

Bigfoot Wallace

As time went on, more and more cowboys spotted the dark horse with its fearsome cargo and not knowing what it was they riddled it with bullets. But the horse and its rider rode on and the legend of *El Muerto,* the headless one, began. Soon, the South Texas brush country became a place to avoid as El Muerto was credited with all kinds of evil and misfortune.

Finally, a posse of local ranchers captured the wild pony at a watering hole near the tiny community of Ben Bolt just south of Alice, Texas. Still strapped firmly on its back was the dried-up corpse of Vidal, now riddled by scores of bullet holes and Indian arrows. The body was buried in an unmarked grave near Ben Bolt, and horse was free of its burden at last.

That should have been the end of *El Muerto,* but the legend would live on to this day. Soon after Vidal's body was laid to rest, soldiers at Fort Inge (present-day Uvalde) began to see the headless rider. Travelers and ranchers in "No Man's Land" also reported continuing to see the apparition.

In 1917, a couple traveling by covered wagon to San Diego, Texas camped for the night outside of town. They would report the next day that as they sat by the campfire a large gray stallion sped by with a headless man shouting "It is mine. It is all mine."

Another sighting of the headless wonder was reported near Freer, Texas in 1969.

The legend lives on and still today, many people report seeing the headless rider galloping though the mesquite on clear and moonlit nights in South Texas.

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Electrifying: Giant futuristic 'Tesla Tower' in abandoned woods near Moscow (PHOTOS, VIDEO)

rt.com

Published time: July 06, 2014 12:51
Edited time: July 07, 2014 11:10

Photo from www.esosedi.ru

No, it's not an alien colony, a time machine, or even a Russian version of America's ionospheric HAARP program. But in a forest near Moscow, this Soviet-era "lightning machine" has a capacity arguably equal to Russia's entire electricity output.

Bloggers flock to see this technical marvel, which has been dubbed the "High Voltage Marx and Tesla Generators Research Facility." The testing range, a branch of the Russian Electrical Engineering Institute, is in the sleepy town of Istra, 40 kilometers west of Moscow.

Photo from www.jerusaleem.ru

It is situated in a relatively small forest next to the New Jerusalem Monastery on the edge of town.

The secret, open-air, high-voltage testing device was constructed in the late 1970s for testing insulators to protect vehicles, aircrafts and electronic equipment against lightning.

The facility is absolutely unique; nothing like it exists anywhere in the world, primarily because of its outstanding charge capacity. At its peak operating capacity the giant Marx generator, when lightning is discharged onto an isolated platform, has power equal to all power generation facilities in Russia – including thermoelectric, hydroelectric, nuclear, solar, and wind power stations combined. But only for about 100 microseconds, Rossiya-1 TV reported.

The Marx Generator was named after German electrical engineer Erwin Otto Marx, who described it back in 1924. In Russia it's known as the Arkadyev-Marx generator, as Russian physicist Vladimir Arkadyev and his co-worker, renowned scientific film director Nikolay Baklin, constructed a so-called "lightning machine" 10 years earlier, in 1914.

Image from Google Maps

The Istra "lightning machine," unparalleled in its discharge capacity, consists of a 3 Megawatt capacity transformer cascade; a 9 Megawatt Pulsed Voltage Generator (PVG), measuring 39.3 meters high, capable of creating 150-meter artificial lightning, believed to be largest in the world; and a 2.25 Megawatt constant voltage unit.

Photo from www.esosedi.ru

The test bench discharges a lightning of a desired capacity on a special heavily isolated platform, on which a device or a material being tested is placed. The platform is full of sensors showing how exactly the electric discharge affected the tested object.

Photo from www.esosedi.ru

When the facility is operating, the static charge in the "hot zone" is so large that the hair of anyone present bristles. In a TV report made for Rossiya-1 TV, staff said that once a nosy observer intruded into the facility and entered the testing ground right in the middle of a experiment, when condensers were charged to the maximum.

"God only knows how this guy remained alive and wasn't struck by a discharge," said Vladimir Sysoev, a leading research worker at the facility.

Others say that lightning is still a matter for deep exploration, and that several trees burned to a crisp around the test bench serve as a reminder that lightning is very hard to control.

The Istra research center has conducted many tests since Soviet times. Among the latest carried out were lightning protection tests for Russia's Sukhoi Superjet aircraft.

As the facility is really expensive to operate, it is only turned on for special occasions.

Photo from www.4turista.ru

Photo from www.esosedi.ru

Photo from www.esosedi.ru

Unlike the famous High Frequency Active Auroral Research Program (HAARP) facility in the US, the Marx generator in Istra was never meant to modulate the weather, yet like HAARP it was involved in designing weapons for the future.

Next to the research facility there is another test center, called "Allure." It is a stationary simulator of the electromagnetic pulse (EMP) needed to test the sturdiness of military and civilian aviation hardware to impulse electromagnetic fields of a natural and artificial nature.

An EMP created by a nuclear explosion is capable of terminally damaging electronic equipment, so the capability of creating an artificial EMP, particularly without exploding a nuclear device, is valuable in a military sense. That's why an EMP weapon is a general's dream in any country.

The Allure complex was set to become a part of a grandiose scientific building, with a dome 118.4 meters high and 236.5 meters wide, but when the construction was nearly ready, the behemoth structure imploded, collapsing on the early morning of Jan. 25, 1985. The building was never reconstructed, though its circular base could be seen from space (coordinates 55° 55' 8"N, +36° 49' 7"E).

Though the dome crumbled because of mistakes in its construction, the collapse had unintended historical consequences.

The high-ranking Soviet Communist Party official in Moscow supervising the construction of the Istra dome was fired from his job and sent to a remote posting as punishment.

He was replaced with fellow Communist apparatchik Boris Yeltsin, who was invited to work in

Photo from www.borshec.ru

Photo from www.esosedi.ru

Photo from www.borshec.ru

Moscow and eventually became Russia's first president.

- one thunder strike , contains enough electricity to power up New York for 4 years ! we are not even close to Tesla's understandings of nature and it functionallity.
- Cool Story Bro! Nobody does Post-Apocalyptic like Russia! (Reality makes Conspiracy Theories Sound a Little Weak) UVB-76 - Story to Follow on RT! (THIS)
- The coordinates given for the remain of the dome are a little wrong, it is located at 55-55-08n x 36-49-07e Cheers bigears.
- I was in that place. Unfortunately almost all towers very damaged and can't work now without repair. Part of the details for this facility are from Germany(GDR).
- LOL Nice article.
- [quote name='Serge Krieger' time='06.07.2014 23:18']There are ways to make use of current energy sources more effective and reduce waste considrably though. But new sources must be found and developed.[/quote] It'll be interesting to see the Toyota Prius's development. It currently plans to use hydrogen. Elon Musk (Tesla CEO) has

Photo from www.4turista.ru

Photo from www.ausairpower.net

called

Photo from wikimapia.org

Logout

Hydrogen fueled cars, "Mind-Boggingly Stupid", lol. Tesla's development of battery-tech is also promising.

- [quote name='Serge Krieger' time='06.07.2014 23:18']There are ways to make use of current energy sources more effective and reduce waste considrably though. But new sources must be found and developed.[/quote] Solar is still very inefficient, but it's getting a lot of research money now. Iceland's use of geothermal energy impresses me.

- If Russia didn't have such an profit from their immense oil and gas reserves, I am sure Russian (ex-Soviet) scientists could develop free energy (and perhaps already have). The technical and some would argue the experimental evidence is clear free energy exists certainly from water (h2o, i.e. hydrogen) and possibly from the air around us if physicists like Wilhelm Reich (contemporary of Einstein) were to be explored rather than ignored and imprisoned by the status-quo defenders.

- It could have provided Doc. Brown his 1.25 Gigawatts of power for his time machine in 1985 in Back to the Future, without needing any Plutonium or lightning rods.

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Ever heard of a ghost fair? It's here in Madhya Pradesh - Hindustan Times

20090128 hindustantimes.com

A sari clad woman with her hair wild scrambles on the floor as if trying to run away from some invisible enemy. There is a look of terror on her face as she sinks to her knees, sobbing loudly.

A man also seems to be desperately trying to escape from some invisible terror, running around, screaming at the top of his voice.

They are the "possessed". They have come to Malajpur, a village among the hills of the Satpura ranges in Madhya Pradesh's Betul district, 350 km from state capital Bhopal, for being exorcised at a shrine of Guru Maharaj Deoji, a Hindu holy man who lived in the 18th century and, devotees believe, had the power to exorcise ghosts and evil spirits.

No one knows how all this began but head priest Chandra Singh says: "Deoji passed on the 'art of exorcism' to his successors (the priests here), and since then the month-long fair is being observed annually for about 250 years here at Malajpur during the ongoing Magh month (the Hindi month which usually falls in January-February)."

As the night of Paush Purnima (full moon preceding Magh month) falls, the 'possessed' are taken to the shrine for being exorcised. The people who bring their relatives here feel that their bodies have been "taken over by the ghosts of the dead" and that exorcism is the only release for them.

As the temple gong sounds, priests (ghost busters) chant mantras and the posessed are brought before them, one by one, for the ritual of severe beating with brooms. In this it is the ghost that is been threatened with the beating, and not the possessed person. After being beaten by the ghost buster amid the chanting of mantras, the so-called 'ghost' leaves the body.

The temple has two banyan trees that the priest says are home to thousands of ghosts and evil spirits that have been "expelled" from human bodies. After being "rid" of the ghost, the person encircles the temple and is declared "cured" and leaves the place with or without paying the fees.

Some people pay as per their capacity, while others offer donations of jaggery - unrefined sugar made from palm juice - at the temple.

This year about 10,000 people are estimated to have arrived in Malajpur for the exorcism.

Some of the people being treated become frenzied. Women savagely toss their hair or roll on the ground. Some run wild or shriek and shout when their relatives bring them before the exorcists, who speak in loud, authoritative voices and the patients respond to their commands.

Psychiatrists say exorcists have some success because they are usually people in positions of authority and people suffering from hysteria respond to authority.

Pradeep Meher, who comes to the fair regularly, claims, "No one returns disappointed. Everyone's wish is fulfilled. When your wish is fulfilled you may come here and offer only a kilogram of jaggery. Also, you are required to encircle the temple once again but in the opposite direction."

The custom is that those who come for treatment circle the temple in one direction while those who come to offer obeisance circle it in the opposite direction.

The psychologists, however, describe the ghost fair as nothing more than superstition. The fair, which started on January 10, will continue till Basant Panchmi, January 30.

(Sanjay Sharma can be contacted at sanjay.s@ians.in)

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Fake police guard government office

18December2014

bbc.com

Last updated at 09:04 ET

A real Chinese policeman

A real Chinese policeman guarding a courthouse

A local government in north-eastern China has admitted to using security guards to pose as police officers, it's been reported.

Despite the practice being illegal in China, the Jiamusi city government in Heilongjiang Province issued security guards with police uniforms and even assigned them a rank, Xinhua news agency reports. China's People Police Law stipulates that police insignias and uniforms are for the exclusive use of the police force. But local government official Zhang Hongbin says the "officers" were brought in to cope with the growing number of complaints filed by the public. "Thousands of petitioners forcibly enter the city government building every year. The situation was out of control sometimes, even when guards were wearing police uniforms," he says.

The government in Jiamusi had been using fake police officers since 2001, according to Xinhua. One guard told the agency "I've been using this police ID number and carrying a Class Three police rank for nearly seven years." Since the revelation, city authorities have "confiscated" all the uniforms, a spokesman for the government told the Global Times, adding, "We haven't heard about any punishment." Some Chinese media have accused the government of abusing the police's authority and using the guards to deter the public from lodging complaints. "This is an unwise and illegal way of avoiding the problem", the Beijing Times reports.

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Faoladh (Werewolf)
The Irish werewolf is not really a monster after all.

The Irish werewolf is different from the Teutonic or European werewolf, as it is really not a "monster" at all. Unlike its continental cousins, this shapeshifter is the guardian and protector of children, wounded men and lost persons. According to some ancient sources, the Irish werewolves were even recruited by kings in time of war. Known in their native land as the *faoladh* or *conroicht*, their predatory behaviour is typical of the common wolf, not beneath the occasional nocturnal raid on local sheep or cattle herds. If attacked or surprised while in wolf form, they usually simply run off because this causes them to shift back into their more vulnerable human form. However, after changing back into a man or woman, evidence of their lupine adventure remains on their bodies. If wounded, the injury remains. If they kill a sheep or cow, the telltale bloodstains stay on their faces and hands.

The most famous of the mythical Irish werewolves are the people of Ossory (modern day Kilkenny) whose legends live on even today. Among other lingering tales, the Ossory folk were documented by none other than Giraldus Cambrensis who, in the year 1185 transcribed what was no doubt a much older, oral folktale. According to Giraldus, the Ossory werewolves worked in pairs, male and female. A chosen couple lived as wolves for seven years before returning to human form to be replaced by a matched set of two others. During their time as wolves, they fed from the herds but this was taken as their due for watching over wandering children, healing the wounded, and guiding lost strangers to safety.

Despite the fact that this is a pre-Christian folk belief, the Irish werewolves eventually gained a reputation for being under a curse from either St Natalia (St Nailè) or, naturally, St Patrick as punishment for some vague transgression committed long ago. If you read Giraldus' account of these creatures, it is easy to separate what may be the original tale from his preachy commentary at the end.

Read the writings of Giraldus Cambrensis on the Ossory werewolves (excerpt from his "Topographica Hibernica") here.

Sources:

"The Wonders of Ireland" by P.W. Joyce, 1911
Book of the Dun Cow, 12th century
"The Wild Night Company" (Irish stories of fantasy and horror) edited by Peter Haining, foreword by Ray Bradbury, Taplinger C, NY 1971
For a short and interesting essay on the secret history of the werewolves (also called "dog-heads") click here.

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Farmers Kill Mexican "Troll" With Machete - Who Forted? Magazine

By Greg Newkirk on June 10, 2011

whofortedblog.com

After killing it with a machete, local farmers snapped cell phone photos of the strange "Chiquimitio Beast"

In March of 2010, in the farming community of Chiquimitio, Michoacán, in Mexico, some locals encountered an odd creature creeping into town.

Described as having long arms and legs, a thin torso, and very little hair, the beast walked in on all fours before leaning up and standing on two.

The residents, frightened by the bizarre animal, attacked, lopping it's head off with a machete and throwing it's body to the dogs, who devoured it. But, thankfully, not before snapping a few photos and video.

The photos eventually made their way to Mexican paranormal investigation group La Esfera Azul, or "The Blue Sphere", who finally placed them online yesterday. When interviewing a witness to the event, the man apologised for not saving the body for evidence, blaming a "temporary psychosis".

Chiquimitio has a long history of sightings of creatures that have often been referred to as "trolls" or "elves", and this particular capture could certainly shed light on those sightings.

So what, exactly, is the little creature? Is it a monster of unknown origin? Probably not. More likely, it's an animal with a genetic defect called cyclopia so rare that it only occurs within about 1 in 16,000 born animals. You may remember **this image of the one eyed kitten** from a few years back, it's very likely the same defect in the Chiquimitio Beast.

The "beast" was probably just a chihuahua suffering from a rare genetic defect called cyclopia.

As for the unfortunate animal with the defect, without a body it's hard to be sure, but when looking at the photos taken from a different angle, it's not a far leap to assume that it was just a really messed up chihuahua dog.

The interesting part about this case is that the eye witnesses claimed the creature walked into town on it's own, and they had reported prior sightings of similar "monsters", meaning that if the witnesses are to be trusted, this little guy (and possibly others) have been wandering around for awhile, something fairly incredible when considering the fact that almost all animals with cyclopia die very shortly after birth.

For more on the Chiquimitio Beast, including video footage, visit **The Blue Sphere.**

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The Flame Tree

Uganda (Buganda region)

Once there was a man and his wife who had only one child, a daughter. But oh-yeh, what a daughter! Mzuri – beautiful in every way, and growing more so every day. She was sunny-tempered and soft-hearted too. Even the animals, even the birds, even the great sun himself would stop mid-track to look at her. As for the young men, you can imagine, eh?

So of course her parents were happy – everybody was. In those days, such a girl was a blessing for a poor village. She was expected to bring wealth to all when she married.

And so it seemed to be. When she came of age, there was a queue the length and breadth of Buganda. Rich men and strong warriors and great chiefs too, with gifts of cattle and cloth and ornaments of gold and horn and shell. And her father received them all, and wondered which man should be his son-in-law. And her mother fed them all and wondered which man would suit her daughter best.

But the girl? She shook her head. "I want none of them," she said. "For I have already given my heart to Tutu, my childhood friend."

Ai-yai-yai! Tutu was only a poor herdsboy. He had no money to pay for a bride. He stood silently in the shadows outside, while inside everybody cried and shouted and tried to reason with the girl.

Then suddenly – kung! kung! ku-kung! In the middle of all the commotion a messenger arrived from the Sekibobo. The High King was calling his men to war. Mbubi the chief of the Buvuma Islands was advancing across the Blue Lake in a fleet of painted war canoes and every man and youth and boy was needed to beat him back. All the rich men and strong warriors, and great chiefs too, gathered together their followers and set off at once for the great lake. And with them went Tutu the herdsboy, carrying only a stick to fight with.

"Be brave, and win glory," Mzuri told him. "Then perhaps my father will let us marry." But after he had left, she thought again. "Better be safe than hurt," she said to herself. "I shall beg him to stay out of the fiercest fighting."

So she ran after him to the edge of the plain, but the men had gone.

"Quick, Fleet-of-foot!" she called to her friend the antelope. "For you run faster than the fastest man. Hurry to my Tutu, and tell him to come back safely."

The antelope was away at once, but by the time he caught up, the men were already lined up for battle, and Tutu was at the front.

Meanwhile, Mzuri was fierce with anxiety. She climbed up into the hills to watch what was happening. But all she could see was a great cloud of dust as the two armies clashed together.

"Fly, Double-eye!" she called to her friend the hawk, "You who set one eye on the way ahead, the other on the earth below. Hurry to the lake and warn Tutu which way to watch for danger."

The hawk was happy to help, but by the time he reached the lake, the people of Buganda were pushing the islanders back to their canoes, and Tutu was in the midst of the battle in a hail of arrows and stones.

By now, Mzuri was cold with dread. "Chief of the Cloud Land," she called to the sun, "you who shine everywhere, let me ride on your rays! Take me to my Tutu so I can care for him myself!"

The sun stretched down, and catching her up in his bright beams, he swung her high into the air, so that she could see the shore of the lake. The High King had won, and Mbubi's men had fled, but the land was littered with the wounded and the dead. And there amongst the bodies, killed by a stone from an islander's sling, lay Tutu, the brave young herdsman.

"Oh, Chief of the Cloud Land and King of the earth beneath," cried the girl, "let me be with my love at last!"

Then the sun was filled with pity and let her fall to the ground. The High King took pity on her too, and buried her with Tutu, her childhood sweetheart. And out of their grave grew a wonderful tree, with smooth brown bark that the antelopes came to rub against, and graceful outstretched branches where the hawk settled to sleep, and big flame-coloured blossoms reaching up to draw the sun. It was so beautiful that everyone liked to look at it. Lovers walked under it, children played round it, and its seeds were taken far and wide to plant in gardens everywhere.

So it spread, and now it blesses even the poorest villages with its beauty. People throughout the world call it the Flame Tree. But in Buganda, the old people remember this story and they call the tree Kifalsakazi, for they know that inside, it is as soft as a lover's heart.

Lifestyle

August 19, 2010

http://www.guampdn.com/guampublishing/navigator/data/EklkkEyVZZCMZLotjI.htm

Flame Tree blooms from love, sorrow

By Jesse Leon Guerrero
Joint Region Edge Staff

Through years of oral tradition, Chamorros have shared life lessons and explanations of the world with each other. The legend of the flame tree, called tronkon atbot (trung-kun at-büt) in Chamorro, is one of those stories that both entertains and speaks about the history of the island.

No one knows when this legend originated, but it resembles William Shakespeare's "Romeo and Juliet." Like that classic love story, a young woman and a young man discover their love for each other despite conflicts between their families.

In the local tale, the relationship began when the young woman met the young man while praying at church. Since their families resented each other because of a land dispute, the two were forbidden to see each other.

The young woman's brothers took it as their duty to prevent them from continuing their relationship. The young woman disregarded these attempts and she and the young man secretly passed messages to each other whenever they could. Eventually, their friendship turned to love and they began speaking to each other through a hole in the garden wall at her house.

These meetings, with the young woman on one side of the wall and the young man on the other, were not enough for them, so they made plans to leave their homes under the dark of night and be together.

Wearing a white scarf, called a mantiya (man-tee-dzuh) in Chamorro, the young woman went early to the meeting place. Her brothers suspected the lovers' plans and hid by a nearby bridge to defend her honor. In the darkness, the brothers slashed wildly with their machetes when they were startled by a commotion. Fleeing in terror, the brothers never realized they had struck a babuen halom tano (ba-bwen hä-lum tä-no), or wild pig in English.

The wounded pig also frightened the young woman away and tore apart her mantiya,

which had fallen on the ground. When the young man arrived at the meeting place, he only found ripped pieces of cloth smeared with blood. Not knowing what had happened, the young man believed the young woman had been killed. In his despair and guilt for convincing the young woman to leave her family, the young man plunged his knife into his chest.

When the young woman returned, she found her lover dying at the foot of a tree blossoming with white flowers. She wept and held him close as he drew his last breath. Not wanting to live without him, the young woman prayed beneath the tree and then took her own life.

The next day both families found the two lovers at the foot of the tree, which had turned red with a bloom of new, flame-like flowers. Whether the flowers had changed color because of the lovers' blood on the ground or the color represents the families' shame and regret, flame trees add a distinct beauty to Guam's landscape.

(U.S. Navy photo by Jesse Leon Guerrero)

Lovers' Tree: A blooming flame tree provides shade at the Padre Palomo Park in Hagatna Aug. 11. Also known as royal poinciana, these trees grow in the wild, while also decorating gardens, homes, churches and government property.

Did You Know

The flame tree, also known as royal poinciana, is native to Madagascar and belongs to the species Delonix regia. It can grow more than 20 feet tall and carries small fern-like leaflets similar to the Chamorro bush called tangantangan. In addition to its bright red flowers, the flame tree is distinguishable by the foot-long bean pods it bears as inedible fruit. White and black moth caterpillars called flame tree loopers are especially attracted to the flame tree's leaves.

It's said that during the first new moon each September, a strange and ghastly sight can be seen off of Ocracoke Island. Here, in the waters off the Outer Banks, each year on that one night a phantom ship, engulfed in flames, floats silently by the island and disappears into the night. How this came to be takes us back to the early days of the North Carolina colony, to days of settlers and pirates, and to the reign of Queen Anne.

In the late Seventeenth and early Eighteenth Centuries, the religious wars that ravaged Europe caused mass migrations of people displaced by the conflicts. England, allied by shared Protestant faith and by marriage bonds to the Palatine States in what is today Germany and Switzerland, opened her doors to thousands of German-Speaking refugees from these small principalities. These refugees were not ordinary peasants, but well-to-do skilled craftsmen and trade workers. The presence of so much unemployed skilled labor served to disrupt the English economy, and so the question of what to do with all these Palatines became pressing on Parliament and on the Queen.

A swiss baron, Cristoph von Graffnreid, offered a solution. With the Crown's permission, he would escort a large number of these refugees to a settlement in the Carolina colonies, to be called New Berne. The plan was met with delight, and the transportation of the Palatine colonists soon began.

It was on one of these voyages that the captain of the chartered vessel, an unscrupulous and greedy man, noticed that his passengers were carrying an unusual amount of gold, jewels, and other wealth with them. Whatever family treasures the Palatines had managed to get out of their homelands were now being taken to the New World. Eyeing this wealth, the greedy captain hatched a plan.

As the ship drew closer to the American coast and the Outer Banks were in sight, the captain put his plan into action, and enlisted the help of his equally greedy crew. One night, the crew crept below decks and, one by one, slit the throat of every man, woman, and child on board as they slept. They then loaded the passenger's treasure on the ship's long boat and determined to set out for the pirate's refuge at Bath

To cover up the crime, the men doused the decks with oil, and as they dropped the long boat into the ocean, set the ship on fire. Soon, the entire ship was engulfed in flames.

As the captain and his men gleefully rowed the long boat away from the flaming ship, they laughed and bragged to each other about their deed. But then the captain looked back towards the flaming ship, and what he saw shocked him. Though the sails were down and the night was still the ship was moving. It was plowing through the waters at high speed, as though it was at full sail and being steered, although there was not a living soul on board. And the ship was coming right towards them.

Panicked, the crew rowed fiercely trying to avoid the oncoming ship, but it was no use. The flaming ship rammed the longboat, sinking it, the treasure, and the murderers beneath the waves. The next day, the burned husk of the ship washed ashore on Ocracoke.

Each year, this strangle spectacle is reenacted off the coast of Ocracoke. If you look into the waters off of the Northeast corner of the island during the first new moon in September, you might see it, too.

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Florida Man Charged With Decapitating Mom With Ax

nbcnews.com

A schizophrenic Florida man chopped off his mother's head with an ax because she kept nagging him about chores, police said Thursday. Christian Jose Gomez, 23, who has several previous arrests, was booked on a charge of first-degree murder for the grisly New Year's Eve crime in Oldsmar.

He allegedly told police he had been planning the attack for two days because he was angry over his mother's requests that he put some boxes in the attic, NBC station WFLA reported. Gomez put his mother's head in a garbage can but couldn't lift her body so he left it outside.

"He just left the body sitting there, next to the trash can, went into the garage, tried to clean up the scene a little bit," Pinellas County Sheriff Bob Gualtieri said. "When he saw that wouldn't happen is when he left."

The body was discovered by victim Marua Suarez Cassagne's older son, who was home at the time but didn't realize what was happening.

Police found the suspect a few blocks away and arrested him after a brief chase. The sheriff said he is a diagnosed schizophrenic who is supposed to be taking medication and was committed for psychiatric evaluation at least once last year.

A relative told NBC News that she believes Gomez was "a good person" whose illness overwhelmed him.

"She was a really good mother," the family member said of Cassagne. "And Christian was normal until like age 20 — I think when he was diagnosed.

"It's so confusing what happened," she said. "It's scary."

— Tracy Connor

First published January 1st 2015, 10:43 am

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Florida Man Discovers It's Legal to Ride Sharks After Taking a Swim with One

By Nicholas St. Fleur
Dec 31, 2014 12:07PM ET

thewire.com

James Robert Bostwick is a Gulf of Mexico charter captain. He is also one of the very few people (we know of) to ever ride a shark. In early June, Bostwick came across a 30-foot whale shark off the coast of Florida and decided to hitch a ride. He swam up to the shark and grabbed onto its dorsal fin. Then he hung on for dear life as the shark swam. A friend took a video (below) and it was posted to Facebook.

After the video began to spread, people began questioning whether his behavior could be illegal. Riding a manatee is illegal in Florida, and several people have actually been arrested for doing this.

Though whale sharks are a protected species, technically it is legal to ride them. Or rather, there's no law on the books preventing it, probably because no legislator imagined someone would actually try to ride a whale shark. Bostwick was pretty relieved to learn it was legal, posting on his Facebook, "Redemption for all the nay sayers that said I was illegal" after the determination was made.

While it wasn't against the law, it is a pretty terrible idea. Sharks have a protective mucus layer on their skin, and when it is disturbed (as it can be when a human tries to ride one) it can hurt the shark's overall health. Also, whale sharks are gigantic. They are about the length of a bus and generally weigh about 20 tons. They can do some damage, even if they can't eat you.

Whale sharks consume plankton, not people, and while their five-foot wide mouths may look scary, Bostwick and the three other people who swam with the whale shark weren't in danger of getting eaten. You should still never try to ride one like this:

After a rare goblin shark popped up last month, two great white sharks were spotted heading towards the Texas coast out of season, and now a whale shark let a guy ride it, I feel like the sharks of the Gulf of Mexico are just messing with us humans.

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A viral video shows what appears to be a horse flying in the sky over Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. In the (very poor quality) footage, we see flashes of lightning illuminate a dark sky, intermittently revealing the flying horse, as we hear a man excitedly speaking in what sounds like Arabic, apparently reciting verses from the Koran.

The origin of the footage is unknown. However, it's path to viral fame began on November 24, 2014 when it was uploaded to Facebook by a Filipino woman named Angel Louise Dela Cruz. She did not claim to have taken the video, nor did she say where she found it. Several days later it was uploaded to YouTube by others, where it was titled "Flying Black Horse in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia," or sometimes "Flying Horse Seen in Makkah." It has been viewed over one million times on YouTube.

What exactly is the creature in the sky? One popular theory is that it's the Buraq, a legendary horse that transported the prophet Muhammad. From Wikipedia:

The most commonly told story is how in the 7th century, Al-Buraq carried the Islamic prophet Muhammad from Mecca to Jerusalem and back during the Isra and Mi'raj or "Night Journey", which is the title of one of the chapters (sura), Al-Isra, of the Quran.

However, one problem with this theory is that the Buraq has wings, which the creature in the video does not have.

Another theory places the horse within Christian eschatology, arguing that it's the black horse prophesied in the Book of Revelation. The Philippine News explains:

Some Christian believers even quoted from a passage in the Book of Revelation at Chapter 6:5-8 which reads: "And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand." According to some Bible scholars, in the Bible's Book of Revelation, the black horse represented famine. The black horse which was seen descending from the sky amidst clouds and thunderstorms was linked by some netizens to the black horse of the "Revelation."

But finally, more skeptical viewers quickly pointed out that the object in the sky is probably just a horse-shaped, helium-filled balloon. Such balloons are apparently sold in a shop in Jeddah. An image (below) that promotes this debunking theory has recently been circulating on Facebook.

Assuming that the balloon theory is correct, the video does not appear to be a deliberate hoax, but rather a case of people interpreting unexplained footage in fanciful ways.

Back in August 1937, there was a deliberate hoax involving a balloon creature, when residents of Nantucket reported sighting a giant sea monster swimming in the ocean. The monster turned out to be an inflatable balloon created for the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade and was floated offshore as a publicity stunt.

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Folk-lore of the Holy Land, Moslem, Christian and Jewish, by J. E. Hanauer [1907], at sacred-texts.com

ABOUT PLANTS

THE Kharrûb, 1 among other trees and shrubs, such as the fig, the sycamore and the caper-bush, is a perch for demons of various kinds, and so classed among unholy plants; while the olive-tree, among others, is sacred, not only because of its great value in furnishing oil and food, but also on account of the following legend:--

"At the death of Mohammed the trees, with a few exceptions--such as the oak, the pine, the orange, and the citron--went into mourning by shedding their leaves as they do in winter. When the others were asked why they did not do the same,

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the olive, as their elder and spokesman, replied, You show your sorrow by external signs, but our grief, who care not for the opinion of others, but only that Allah, who reads the secrets of the heart, should approve of our motives, is no less sincere, though inward. Should you cleave my trunk open, for instance, you would find that at its core it . has become black with grief."

The Abhar 1 is another sacred tree, because its nut is used in the manufacture of rosaries, 2 and because, when he fled from Pharaoh, Moses, tired in the shadeless desert, planted his staff of storax in the soil and lay down in its scanty shade, which was instantly increased, Allah causing the staff to sprout and put forth branches bearing leaves and blossoms. In like manner the Miriamìyeh or sage 3 is much esteemed; not only for its medicinal properties which cause its dried leaves to be burned in fumigation in cases of cholera, small-pox, measles and other contagious and epidemic diseases, while an infusion of its leaves is a specific for various maladies; but also because the Virgin Mary, being overcome with fatigue during her flight into Egypt, rested under a sage-bush; and, breaking off a bunch of its leaves, wiped her brow with them; and when she rose refreshed, blessed the plant and bestowed upon it the virtues it now possesses.

The Nubk or Lotus 4 is also a sacred plant. It

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often marks the boundaries between the lands of different villages, and some believe that the hedge surrounding Paradise is formed of it. When a Lotus-tree has attained the age of forty years it often becomes the abode of some departed saint. It is therefore a dangerous thing to cut down a Lotus tree that is above that age, as the saint might resent the deed. In travelling through Palestine one frequently meets with clumps of sacred trees, not necessarily always Lotus, which are thus haunted by the spirits of holy men; and, on Thursday evenings especially, one sometimes sees these trees lighted up, and can hear snatches of sacred instrumental music proceeding therefrom, while lights appear to be darting from tree to tree. It is a sign that the saints are keeping festival, and exchanging visits. A sacred tree much affected by such spirits is the Tamarisk. 1 If, when passing these trees on windy nights, you listen attentively, you may sometimes distinctly hear the holy name "Allah" soughing through the branches.

It is not generally known that one of the proofs that the time when the Orthodox Greek Christians celebrate Christmas is the right one, and that the Latins and other Westerns are wrong in the time of their celebration, is that on the Greek Christmas Eve all trees and plants, but especially those on the banks of the Jordan, worship the Saviour. This important fact was discovered in the following manner:--A certain man rode into Lydda shortly before midnight on the Greek Christmas Eve. On reaching his

quarters he tied up his donkey to the

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trunk of a palm-tree which, as it lay prostrate in the yard, he naturally supposed had been blown down by a recent storm. Next morning, however, when he arose and went to look after his donkey, his astonishment was great to find the tree erect and the ass hanging beside and from the palm-trunk. As the animal was quite dead, the fact was proved beyond dispute.

Another remarkable plant, much talked about is the "'Ushbet el Kurka" or "Tortoise-Herb." He who finds this plant has made his fortune in more senses than one. In the first place, its leaves are of pure gold. Further, if one is so fortunate as to find and gather it, he has the marvellous power of unconsciously gaining the goodwill of everybody, and can, if he choose, fascinate both men and women and make them his willing slaves. Even should he unconsciously tread upon this plant, without picking it, he is able, without himself being conscious of the fact, or others being able to explain it, to win the love and esteem of all whom he meets. Even goats which browse upon it have their teeth turned to gold. Unfortunately this plant is extremely rare. Some years ago there was a fellâh living in a village in Judæa who knew all about it, where it grew, at what season it might be found, its appearance, and so forth. He was offered a large sum of money by a rich Bethlehemite for these secrets, but, being a man of high principles, he refused the offer rather than betray the honour of the countryside by putting a Christian in possession of such powers. He is dead now, and his knowledge perished with him.

Footnotes

286:1 *Ceratonia siliqua*.

287:1 *Storax officinalis*.

287:2 Called in Arabic Massâbih (praising instruments), and used by Moslems and Christians at their devotions.

287:3 *Salvia ceratophyx vel controversa*.

287:4 *Zizyphus spina Christi*.

288:1 *Tamaria Syriaca*.

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Victorian Strangeness: Four Christmas incidents

23December2014

bbc.com

Last updated at 19:42 ET

Man shooting at another man

Christmas as we know it was a creation of the Victorians. Here are four Christmas calamities unearthed by Jeremy Clay, the author of The Burglar Caught by a Skeleton, a collection of bizarre stories from Victorian newspapers.

1. Father Christmas on fire

In hindsight, the outfit may have been a mistake. After dressing up in a makeshift Father Christmas costume fashioned from luxuriant quantities of cotton wool, Otto Krellwitz took himself off to the swankiest do in town.

The well-heeled folk of Houghton, Michigan, had been looking forward to the masquerade ball for weeks, but it's fair to say the night didn't go quite as planned.

"The dancing and hilarity were at their height," reported the Midland Daily Telegraph in February 1891, "when an untoward accident occurred which brought the proceedings to an unexpected termination, and for a short time seemed likely to end in a catastrophe."

In his snowy, flammable robes, the hapless Krellwitz was dancing and pirouetting with great vigour when he careered into a boy dressed as a ghoul who was carrying a candle.

Ah.

Almost at once, Father Christmas was ablaze.

Father Christmas stands next to open fire - illustration

"The ladies near him started screaming," said the Telegraph, "and the place was immediately thrown into a state of the utmost commotion, some of the dancers rushing to the doors to get out, whilst others ran to Krellwitz's assistance.

"The latter, however, losing all presence of mind, ran frantically about the saloon, setting fire to the costumes of all with whom he came into contact.

"For several minutes the scene was almost indescribable. A perfect panic reigned, those whose clothes were on fire rushing wildly about to the danger of others."

Many of the guests were severely burned. As for Krellwitz himself, "it is feared that he and one or two others may succumb to their injuries".

But the warnings were there, to anyone who cared to read them in the newspapers. Only a few weeks before, AC Taylor, the dispenser at Peterborough Infirmary, had dressed as Santa Claus, with a "flowing hirsute appendage of cotton wool", to hand out gifts to patients from the tree.

You can guess what happened next, but it seems to have come as a surprise to Mr Taylor, whose moustache and eyebrows were singed off, and his head badly burned. "Fortunately, a panic among the inmates was prevented," said the Sheffield Evening Telegraph.

Two years earlier, a fancy dress ball near Dun Laoghaire in Ireland, a guest called Mr Deane arrived dressed as Father Christmas and soon contrived to catch fire. "He was quickly enveloped in flames," said the Western Daily Press. "His wife, to whom he was only recently married, rushed to his assistance, and unfortunately her clothes also became ignited." The quick-thinking son of the host ripped the cloth from the billiard table and threw over them both. It did the trick, but not before he was burned too.

Still the lessons weren't heeded. In 1893, at the National School in Grays, Essex, during a performance of The Story of a Christmas Pudding, a boy called Frederick Smith strayed too near the footlights and his costume was rapidly ablaze.

For a moment, pandemonium reigned. But cometh the hour, cometh the man, in the superhero shape of teacher Mr Pean who earned the biggest cheer of the night by leaping on to the stage and putting out the flames with his bare hands, which were badly burned.

"The lad himself was none the worse for the adventure," reported the Essex Newsman, "except that his cheek was slightly scorched."

2. A carol singer shot dead

1900: A band playing Christmas carols outdoors in the rain and wind

A frosty street in Victorian England. A bleak midwinter's night. A merry huddle of carol singers, wrapped up against the biting cold, their voices joined in tidings of comfort and joy.

Everything was exactly as a hack Christmas card artist might have sketched it, right up until the moment a shot rang out and one of the carollers slumped to the ground.

It happened in the small hours on 25 December 1886. Loath to call time on their booze-enriched evening, a gang of pals was making its way through Clapham, singing.

"Let's call at the Rising Sun," one of them must have suggested. "The landlord would enjoy that." In this, as we shall see, they were sorely mistaken.

It was gone 01:00 when they burst into the back yard of the pub and let rip. They had flutes and a clarinet. A drum too. Well, a tin bath they'd found by the bin, which they were beating enthusiastically with a stick.

Inside, James Gardiner was rudely awakened by the hubbub. For quarter of an hour, he suffered in silence, then could take no more. He inched open his bedroom window, and yelled at them to stop, reported the Pall Mall Gazette. "Not heeding his request, they continued to sing, and Gardiner, without further parley, fired a six-chambered revolver."

Father-of-two Robert Janaway was hit in the side. The window flung fully open. "Have I shot anybody?" Gardiner called out, tentatively. "You've shot Bob," a voice shouted back. And with that, as Janaway's brother William would later testify, "there was a rare fuss".

William and his friends carried Robert home and then on to the hospital, but he died after undergoing emergency surgery.

When a policeman arrived at the pub, he found the landlord in his night-dress, sobbing with grief. He hadn't meant to hurt anyone, Gardiner said. He merely wanted to scare them.

As it turned out, he managed both.

3. One dead in the Battle of Christmas Dinner

Lit Christmas pudding

Like thousands of British soldiers in the mid-19th Century, James King gave his life for Queen and Country.

Unlike his brothers-in-arms, he didn't die in the killing fields of the Crimea. No, Pte King fell in Hampshire, in the long-forgotten Battle of Christmas Dinner.

You'd be forgiven for never having heard of it. It wasn't the bloodiest. It wasn't the lengthiest. It wasn't the most significant. But it was certainly the weirdest. One side, stood the British Army. On the other… Actually, that was the British Army too.

Hostilities broke out Christmas Day in 1859. The 24th Regiment of Foot and the Tower Hamlets Militia had been sharing a barracks in Aldershot. They'd eaten their Christmas dinner, served, as was the custom, by the officers, who had then left the troops to their own devices.

When the soldiers mingled afterwards, replete and content, talk turned to the meal they'd just scoffed. The Tower Hamlets Militia had dined on beef and pudding, washed down with a pint of beer each. Ours was better, sniffed the men of the 24th, who'd eaten goose.

The row began harmlessly enough, but, in the way of these things, it soon escalated. Voices were raised. Words were exchanged. There was a push. Then a shove. Mops and brooms were commandeered as weapons. Somebody lobbed a few rounds of coal. Someone lobbed a few back. Salvos of coal were exchanged. There was a great crash of glass. Then, with the mood darkening, some of the 24th went to fetch their rifles, and began loading them.

Pte King had been singing Auld Lang Syne with his pals when a volley of fire erupted from across the parade ground. "I am shot," he cried, then collapsed.

"I felt for the wound, but could not find it," Pte George Sawyer told the inquest into King's death, "and told him he was only larking, but a comrade pulled up his shirt, which was bloody, and then we saw a little hole, bleeding slowly."

The guns blazed for up to 10 minutes, and when they fell silent, almost every window in the block was smashed, and the walls, doors and windows were peppered with bullet holes.

The 24th, who shouldered the blame at the inquest, were ordered to leave camp for Cork. Their voyage from Portsmouth lasted nearly six days, reported the Reading Mercury: "The men on landing looked in anything but good condition."

It was justice, of sorts.

4. Gunfight at a Christmas Day wedding

If she'd dared to imagine the very worst thing which could happen on her wedding day, the bride-to-be couldn't possibly have got close to the truth.

It was bad enough that her guests fled the reception. It was worse that the house blew up behind them as they ran. But all wasn't lost, until the murderous gunfight which followed.

Festival goodwill was in fairly short supply in and around the mining town of Hazleton, Pennsylvania, on Christmas Day 1893. Just up the road, a free-for-all brawl between 50 men left two shot and two more stabbed, but it was the Polish wedding in town which really took the biscuit.

For quite some time, there had been bad blood between the Poles and Austrians of Hazleton. That regrettable state of affairs wasn't helped by the decision of some dastardly Austrians to pack dynamite into the house where the happy couple would return as husband and wife.

The fuse was about to be lit when one of the Austrians felt a sudden pang of conscience and let slip that the best man's speech wasn't going to be the most charged part of the afternoon.

As the guests scarpered, the house exploded. When the smoke cleared, the furious reprisals began in a frenzied fire-fight.

A dozen were shot, and many more injured by lunging knives and thwacking clubs. Somewhere amid the melee, the groom was killed.

So all things considered, maybe the headline in the Middlesbrough Daily Gazette didn't really convey the jaw-dropping turmoil of the day: Lively Conflict at a Wedding.

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Friends of Eastern Cemetery seek caretakers for past generations' crumbling home

wdrb.com

Posted: Dec 18, 2014 1:17 PM PST Updated: Dec 18, 2014 2:05 PM PST

By Rachel Collier
rcollier@fox41.com

Eastern Cemetery's aging headstones lie in ruin, with some chance the people they memorialize don't lie beneath them.

Eastern Cemetery's aging headstones lie in ruin, with some chance the people they memorialize don't lie beneath them.

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (WDRB) -- Right next door to Cave Hill Cemetery is Eastern Cemetery, which has a very different story from its neighbor. Juxtaposed with Cave Hill's clean, white rows of headstones lie Eastern's cracked and crumbled monuments, toppled over and leaning against each other like old friends.

"Apparently getting drunk in Kentucky and kicking over headstones is considered a recreational activity," U of L staff archaeologist Phillip DiBlasi said.

But the appearance of Eastern Cemetery isn't the worst part. It's what lies below.

"They were digging through bodies and crunching them into pieces, and putting new bodies in," DiBlasi explained.

Almost from its start in the 1800s, graves were reused. DiBlasi said that continued until about June 1989.

"Believe it or not, they started in 1843 and by 1850, we start noticing in the documentation evidence that they're overburying," he said. "They're using graves over again."

DiBlasi was brought in to study the cemetery in the late '80s.

"In 1989 a man came forward and said, they're reusing graves over again, this is not right," DiBlasi said. "and he went to the Attorney General's Office."

"The Office of the Attorney General began to investigate and found out this was true," said Allison Martin with the Kentucky Office of the Attorney General. "Not only were people being double buried in plots but sometimes triple, quadruples, eight or nine bodies buried in one plot of cemetery."

About 130,000 people are buried in a cemetery that should only hold 30,000.

"They literally found McDonald's bags under the front seat of the truck with human remains in them," DiBlasi said. "When we got a court order to bring the records to the university when I pulled the file drawers open, there were human remains back behind the file cards. They were digging through people willy nilly and it was really obvious."

A big building at the back of Eastern Cemetery really serves no purpose. It used to hold hundreds of

urns inside, but people were dumping the ashes and taking the urns to sell as scrap metal. Under a court order, the more than 600 urns were brought here for safekeeping, and more than 200 sit on the shelves unclaimed.

Criminal charges were dismissed and financial claims were wiped out against the corporation that owned Eastern Cemetery.

"The cemeteries went bankrupt and they're in limbo," Martin said. "Nobody wants to buy a cemetery that doesn't have any burial plots left because there's no way to make any money off of it."

It's a nightmare underground that would take millions of dollars to make right.

"It's a political nightmare, it's a financial nightmare," DiBlasi said. "It was a phenomenal figure to correct what was wrong underground."

Above ground, Dismas Charities and a few thousand dollars out of a perpetual care fund keep the grass cut, but that is not enough.

A steady group of volunteers has also been working there since March 2013.

Recently, the group has established itself as a non-profit organization called Friends of Eastern Cemetery, allowing room for tax-deductable donations and sponsors.

"Louisville prides itself on its historic district, prides itself on being weird. Here's this cemetery right in the middle of it all, that you know, is just almost invisible to the community it seemed like," said Andy Harpole, with friends of Eastern Cemetery.

They don't just mow and trim, they fix headstones and unearth some swallowed by tree roots.

It's a huge undertaking that is time consuming and costly.

"It's not five years, it's not 10 years, it's not 20 years, 30, 40, 50 60, 100. It's forever and it's a tremendous amount of money and hundreds of millions of dollars," Martin said.

Andy Harpole, president of the Friends of Eastern Cemetery, says he has long-term goals.

From day one people have said, you're not going to make a difference there. People have cut the grass once or twice and they don't come back," Harpole said. "We're doing it because we want to do it. we're doing it because we've met the families and heard their stories."

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Fuente Magna, the Controversial Rosetta Stone of the Americas

October 2, 2014 6:34 pm theepochtimes.com

The universe is full of mysteries that challenge our current knowledge. In "Beyond Science" Epoch Times collects stories about these strange phenomena to stimulate the imagination and open up previously undreamed of possibilities. Are they true? You decide.

The Fuenta Magna is a large stone vessel, resembling a libation bowl, that was found in 1958 near Lake Titicaca in Bolivia. It features beautifully engraved anthropomorphic characters, zoological motifs characteristic of the local culture, and, more surprisingly, two types of scripts —a proto-Sumerian ancient alphabet and a local language of the ancient Pukara, forerunner of the Tiahuanaco civilization. Often referred to as "the Rosetta Stone of the Americas," the stone vessel is one of the most controversial artifacts in South America as it raises questions about whether there may have been a connection between the Sumerians and the ancient inhabitants of the Andes, located thousands of miles away.

Lake Titicaca, Bolivia (Shutterstock)

The ancient relic was discovered accidentally by a farmer working on a private estate owned by the Manjon family. The owners subsequently delivered it to the city hall of La Paz in 1960 in return for land near the capital. Around the same time, Bolivian archaeologist Max Portugal Zamora learned of its existence and attempted, unsuccessfully, to decipher the unusual inscriptions, not least because he failed to recognize that the writing upon the bowl was a type of cuneiform text dating back some 5,000 years.

The Fuente Magna bowl remained in storage in the Museo de los Metales Preciosos ("Museum of Precious Metals") for approximately 40 years, until two Bolivian researchers, Argentine Bernardo Biados and archaeologist Freddy Arce, sought to investigate the origins of the mysterious relic. They were eventually put in contact with Maximiliano, a 92-year-old local who, after seeing a picture of the bowl, claimed it was once in his possession. Not realizing its significance, Maximiliano admitted that he had used the bowl to feed his pigs.

The two researchers took detailed photographs of the bowl and sent them to epigraphist Dr. Clyde Ahmed Winters, in the hope that he may be able to decipher the inscriptions. Dr. Winters, an ancient languages expert, compared the inscriptions to Libyco-Berber writing used in the Sahara approximately 5,000 years ago. The writing was used by the Proto-

The Fuente Magna Bowl was found to have two types of scripts engraved on the inside. (Courtesy of Bernardo Biados's research team)

Dravidians (of the Indus Valley), Proto-Mande , Proto-Elamites, and Proto-Sumerians. Dr. Winters, in his article "Decipherment of the Cuneiform Writing on the Fuente Magna Bowl," concluded that the writing on the bowl "was probably Proto-Sumerian," and offered the following translation:

"Approach in the future (one) endowed with great protection the Great Nia. [The Divine One Nia(sh) to] establish purity, establish gladness, establish character. (This favorable oracle of the people to establish purity and to establish character [for all who seek it]). [Use this talisman (the Fuente bowl)] To sprout [oh] diviner the unique advice [at] the temple. The righteous shrine, anoint (this) shrine, anoint (this) shrine; The leader takes an oath [to] establish purity, a favorable oracle (and to) establish character. [Oh leader of the cult,] open up a unique light [for all], [who] wish for a noble life."

ALSO SEE: Atlantis May Have Been in Bolivia?

This translations suggests that the Fuente Magna bowl may have been used to make libations to the Goddess Nia to request fertility. The figure on the Fuente Magna, which appears to be in a "Goddess pose," with open arms and legs spread, is believed to support Dr Winters' translation.

A figure on the Fuente Magna bowl. (Courtesy of Bernardo Biados's research team)

If Dr. Winters' translation is correct, this has major implications for our understanding of both Sumerian civilization and the ancient culture of Bolivia. Researcher Yuri Leveratto aptly poses the question: "How is it possible that proto-Sumerian inscriptions were found in a bowl that has been found near the Titicaca Lake, 3,800 meters [2.3 miles] above sea level, thousands of kilometers far away from the area where the Sumerian people used to live?"

According to Bernardo Biados, the Fuente Magna was most likely crafted by Sumerian people who settled in Bolivia sometime after 2,500 B.C. According to Biados, the Sumerians were known to sail to the distant Indian subcontinent and some Sumerian ships may have made their way around South Africa and entered one of the currents in the area that lead

across the Atlantic from Africa to South America. It is possible that some chose to stay and explore into the Andes, perhaps searching for areas high on the plateau of Bolivia where food was being produced. Yuri Leveratto says, "the Sumerian culture influenced the people of the plateau, not only from a religious point of view, but also in the language. In fact, some linguists have found many similarities between the proto-Sumerian and Aymara languages."

However, this perspective, and indeed the initial translation work of Dr. Winters has not been without its critics. Jason Colavito, a known skeptic and "debunker," suggests that there is only a small degree of correlation between the script on the bowl and Proto-Sumerian characters. Colavito points out that the bowl has a highly problematic provenance, and may simply be a hoax. Biados says this is incorrect, citing the overwhelming support from major portions of the academic community.

It is clear that the Fuente Magna bowl remains a matter of contention between academics. It is hoped that further archaeological and linguistic research may help to unravel the story behind this mysterious artifact, as doing so may help to expand our understanding of the great civilizations of our past and their influence throughout the world.

April Holloway is an editor and writer with Ancient-Origins. She completed a Bachelor of Science degree and currently works as a researcher.

Visit the Epoch Times Beyond Science page on Facebook, and subscribe to the Beyond Science newsletter to continue exploring the new frontiers of science!

**Image of Lake Titicaca in Bolivia via Shutterstock*

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S. E. Schlosser

Now it happened that there was a mining camp in Colorado where more than an average number of the miners were bald. An enterprising hair tonic salesman from Kentucky decided to take advantage of this golden opportunity, so he made the trip north. It was a rainy summer evening. The salesman was headed towards the mining camp with four bottles of hair tonic under his arm. As he was crossing one of the trout streams which lead to the Arkansas River, the salesman slipped and dropped two bottles of hair tonic into the water. The bottles broke, and the hair tonic spilled into the stream.

Not too long after this incident, the fishermen along the Arkansas developed a new method for catching trout. They'd head to the bank of the river carrying a red and white barber pole and some scissors. Then they would set up the barber pole and call out: "Get your free shave and a hair cut here". All the trout whose fur had grown to long or who needed their beards trimmed would hop right out of the water and be picked up by the fishermen. It wasn't until the mills began muddying the waters so much that the fish couldn't see the barber poles that the practice died out.

Comments? Email us at webmaster@americanfolklore.net
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HICKEN'S FUR BEARING TROUT
Iceberg Lake

Photo by R. E. Marble, Belton,Montana

FISHING BAN MAY BE LIFTED TO CATCH FUR-BEARING TROUT

DENVER (Colo.) Jan. 9.—(U.P.) The Colorado Game and Fish Commission decided today to find out for sure if the Salida (Colo.) Chamber of Commerce was only fooling when it announced that fur-bearing trout swim in the near-by waters of the Arkansas River.

SEEKS PERMISSION

Otis E. McIntyre, secretary of the commission, said he will recommend that the commission grant official permission for a Salida angler to fish for a trout with a fur coat.

McIntyre's announcement came after Wilbur B. Foshay, secretary of the Salida Chamber complained that it was impossible under present game laws for the town to prove its story

CAUGHT IN JANUARY

Furry fin-flippers, Foshay said in a letter to McIntyre, can be caught only in January—when fishing is not permitted in Colorado streams.

"We appreciate it is out of season," Foshay wrote, "but there is nothing left but to try to get one of them."

McIntyre said that "when I first read of the fur-bearing trout I thought it was more or less of a joke."

"Perhaps there is something in the story," he said. "At any rate, it might be well to find out."

Gan Ying, a Chinese explorer in Ancient Rome

http://peashooter85.tumblr.com/

As some of this blog's most loyal followers may know, one topic which Peashooter is especially obsessed with is Ancient Roman contacts with Han dynasty China, or Chinese contacts with Ancient Rome. One piece of history that piques his interest Is the story of Gan Ying, an ancient Chinese explorer that almost made it to the Roman Empire. In the year 97 AD Gan Ying was sent west by the Chinese General Ban Chao to explore rumors of a mysterious empire to the west whose power was said to rival that of China. At the time, both China and Rome had vague notions of each other's existence, as both powers shared trade goods across the Silk Road. In years previous, there were rumors of Sino-Roman contact, including tales of Chinese ambassadors visiting the court of Emperor Augustus. However, the journey of Gan Ying is the first well documented and proven attempt at Chinese-Roman contact.

Gan Ying journeyed the well traveled merchant routes of the Silk Road. According to records of his journey, he made it as far as the "Western Sea". Most historians believe the Western Sea to be the Persian Gulf. However, other historians cite that the Western Sea was described as a vast ocean that took weeks, perhaps months to cross. Given that the Persian Gulf is no vast sea, some historians speculate that Gan Ying was referring to the Mediterranean. Peashooter is one of the few who agrees. Deterred by tales of a vast ocean, Gan Ying decided to return home rather than continue on to Rome itself. However, before leaving for his return journey, Gan Ying interviewed various peoples to learn more about Rome. He describes the Roman Empire as thus,

"Roman territory extends for several thousands of li (Chinese miles). It has more than four hundred walled cities. There are several tens of smaller dependent kingdoms. The walls of the towns are made

of stone. They have established postal relays at intervals, which are all plastered and whitewashed. There are pines andcypresses, as well as trees and plants of all kinds"

Gan Ying further describes the Roman government and economy,

Their kings are not permanent. They select and appoint the most worthy man. If there are unexpected calamities in the kingdom, such as frequent extraordinary winds or rains, he is unceremoniously rejected and replaced. The one who has been dismissed quietly accepts his demotion, and is not angry. The people of this country are all tall and honest. They resemble the people of the Middle Kingdom and that is why this kingdom is called Da Qin [or 'Great China']. This country produces plenty of gold [and] silver, [and of] rare and precious [things] they have luminous jade, 'bright moon pearls,' Haiji rhinoceroses, coral, yellow amber, opaque glass, whitish chalcedony, red cinnabar, green gemstones, goldthread embroideries, rugs woven with gold thread, delicate polychrome silks painted with gold, and asbestos cloth. They also have a fine cloth which some people say is made from the down of 'water sheep,' but which is made, in fact, from the cocoons of wild silkworms. They blend all sorts of fragrances, and by boiling the juice, make a compound perfume. [They have] all the precious and rare things that come from the various foreign kingdoms. They make gold and silver coins. Ten silver coins are worth one gold coin. They trade with Anxi [Parthia] and Tianzhu [Northwest India] by sea. The profit margin is ten to one. ... The king of this country always wanted to send envoys to Han, but Anxi [Parthia], wishing to control the trade in multi-coloured Chinese silks, blocked the route to prevent [the Romans] getting through [to China]."

All of the above is accurate, with the various goods described being produced somewhere in the Roman Empire or imported from foreign lands. Gan Ying's description of Roman government at the time, however, is a bit off as Roman Emperors tended to either live a very long prosperous reign, or a short reign ending in extreme violence. Most historians believe that Gan Ying was ascribing Roman Government with traditional Chinese government, which relied upon elected ministers who shared power with the Han Emperor. Peashooter speculates that Gan Ying may have confused the government of the Roman Empire with that of the fallen Roman Republic, whose consuls were limited to serving only 1 year terms.

After Gan Ying's journeys to Rome, the Chinese would continue to refer to the Romans as the "Da Qin". While Gan Ying may or may not have reached the Roman Empire it was the first fully record attempt to do so. The first official contact between Rome and China occurred in 166 AD when Chinese records show that envoys from the DaQin sent by King Andun (Emperor Marcus Aurelius) visited the court of the Han Emperor. Since then several other envoys were sent by the Roman Empire, and later the Eastern (Byzantine) Roman Empire. Further proof of the Roman-Chinese contact can be found with the many Roman trade goods discovered in China such as coins, asbestos fireproof textiles, and glassware, as well as the many surviving Chinese trade goods found in Europe, such as silk and jewelry.

Beer Company Builds 300-Keg Christmas Tree

huffingtonpost.com

AP Posted: 12/11/2014 6:15 pm EST Updated: 12/11/2014 6:59 pm EST

BEER KEG TREE

A western New York brewery has constructed a Christmas tree out of hundreds of beer kegs. All that's missing is the beer. | Shawn Dowd / Democrat & Chronicle / AP

ROCHESTER, N.Y. (AP) — A western New York brewery has constructed a Christmas tree out of hundreds of beer kegs. All that's missing is the beer.

The Genesee Brewing Co. built the 23-foot-high Christmas tree out of 300 stainless steel kegs outsides its Brew House in downtown Rochester.

The keg tree is trimmed with 600 feet of green lights and topped by a rotating Genesee sign. More than 20 of Genesee's elves — also known as employees — got to work designing and building the keg tree.

Alas, beer lovers, the kegs are empty. But the company says when the tree is dismantled the kegs will return to the production line and be refilled.

The official public lighting ceremony is set for Dec. 18.

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Chicken Alley is a small, narrow alley in Downtown Asheville. Named because of the chickens that would congregate there in the city's earlier days, the most prominent chicken found today in Chicken Alley is the one in the large mural by local artist Molly Must that decorates the entrance. But another, non-poultry, presence is said to lurk in this alley.

Dr. Jamie Smith was a physician who practiced in Asheville at the end of the Nineteenth Century. Dr. Smith was known for wearing a wide-brimmed, black fedora hat and a long, duster-style coat. He always carried his medicine bag and a cane with a silver pommel on it.

Dr. Smith was, in addition to being a physician, something of a lover of a good time. Asheville was a rougher city in those days. Men who worked in the logging camps and nearby industries would flood the town on weekends looking for a drink and some company. There was enough money from visiting tourists even n those days to keep the bars and brothels open late. Liquor flowed freely, virtue was easily bought and sold, and Dr. Smith loved every minute of it. There are those who say that the majority of his practice came treating the various social diseases that were the constant companions of the city's good times.

All of this came to an end in 1902, when Dr. Smith walked in to a bar called Broadway's Tavern, which was located in Chicken Alley. In a case of remarkably bad timing, Smith happened to stumble into the middle of a vicious bar brawl. He tried to break it up, but was stabbed in the heart by one of the men in the fight. He died instantly.

Jamie Smith's murderer was never caught. Broadway's Tavern burned to the ground the year after the fatal stabbing.

Ever since that night, people have reported seeing a strange figure walking in the alley late at night. He's said to be a shadowy man, wearing a long, black coat and a wide-brimmed black hat. He carries an old-fashioned physician's bag and a cane with a silver head. People have reported hearing the tip of the cane tapping as he walks along the pavement.

The people who live Chicken Alley believe that this is the ghost of Dr. Jamie Smith. He has been seen for over 100 years, and throughout that time the figure's appearance has been described with remarkable consistency. Dr. Smith's fashion sense was apparently distinctive enough to make him recognizable even beyond the grave. The locals are divided as to the reason his spirit returns to the spot where he met his end. Some say he is still trying to stop the fight. Some say he still just wants a drink.

How to Get There

Chicken Alley is located in downtown Asheville between Broadway and Lexington. The Alley runs between Carolina Lane and Woodfin Street, and the entrance on Woodfin is clearly distinguishable by the large chicken mural.

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East Hall is an unimposing dormitory on the campus of Appalachian State University. It's red brick walls and grayish-white interiors don't make it seem any different than any other student dumping ground in America, but according to the residents who've lived here over the years, it's the home to many bizarre occurrences.

The story begins in the early 1960s, when Appalachian State was still Appalachian Teacher's college. East Hall is U-shaped and built into the side of a steep hill, and consequently two of the wings have three stories, while the oldest wing in the building has five. It's on the lowest floor of the five-story wing, a level known as the basement, that a young student tragically took her own life. The cause of her suicide is not remembered, maybe it was an unhappy love affair, maybe it was just the endless Boone winters getting her down. Whatever the reason, one morning her body was discovered hanging from a long silk scarf in the basement restroom.

Ever since then, the whole old wing of East Hall has been a center of strange an unnatural activity.

Students living in East report that hearing faint, whispered voices when walking in the hallways is common. Some students have said that they've woken in the middle of the night to see strange balls of light hovering near the ceiling of their dorm rooms.

There's at least one report of a student being pushed over by the ghost. The young man said that he was walking on the third floor of East Hall on his way to the bathroom when he said he heard a voice, coming from nowhere and saying something that sounded like "My dorm." As soon as this happened, he experienced what felt like a hand pushing against his forehead, and said that his legs kept moving forward but his head was being held in place, and he toppled over backwards.

But the strongest presence of the spirit seems to be in the basement, particularly in a narrow room that adjoins the bathroom where the young woman died. Many students have reported feeling unusual cold spots when moving through the basement. Others have reported being alone in one of the basement rooms but feeling a strong sense of presence, as if there is someone else in the room with them.

Many students have also reported seeing a strange, glowing blue mist in the basement. Roughly the size of a human being, this glowing mist is said to be seen moving through the basement, passing through walls, and always returning to the small bathroom that was the scene of the tragedy. An intense feeling of anger and malevolence is said to accompany the appearance of this mist.

Whatever is inhabiting East Hall, it seem to be having an affect on everyone who lives there. East Hall has a reputation for being a hot spot for student breakdowns and mental health problems. Students who live in the dorm exhibit a bizarre variety of eccentric and even psychotic behaviors. The campus mental health services keeps a quiet watch on the students in this dormitory, and is always on the lookout for the first signs of someone "Going East."

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Mordecai House is one of Raleigh's finest historic buildings. The original portion of the house dates from around 1785 and was built by Joel Lane for his son, Henry. Joel Lane was one of the instrumental figures in the establishment of Raleigh as the first planned state capitol in the US. The Capitol building and a substantial portion of downtown Raleigh all stand on what was once Lane's Wakefield Plantation.

Why Raleigh was built where it was, instead of closer to the Neusse River and its access to transportation and the sea has always been something of a historical puzzle. There's a legend that Lane was the one behind the location. The story goes that Lane persuaded the Capitol planning committee to purchase a large chunk of his land at a tidy profit during a night of very heavy drinking at a local tavern, with Lane picking up the tab.

Mordecai House acquired its name when Moses Mordecai married into the Lane family in 1817. Mordecai actually married in to the family twice. When his first wife, Margaret Lane, died in 1824, he married her younger sister, Ann.

Moses Mordecai was a member of one of the most prominent and fascinating Ashkenazi Jewish Families in early American history. His father, Jacob Mordecai, was a progressive, intelligent leader who was the first director of the Female Seminary in Warrenton, North Carolina. This seminary provided an unusual multi-faith teaching environment for young ladies of the town. Moses Mordecai's older sister, Rachel Mordecai Lazarus, was an extremely intellectually gifted woman whose correspondence with the best-selling novelist Maria Edgeworth persuaded the author to amend the anti-semitic prejudice that unfortunately permeated much of her early work. Rachel Mordecai Lazarus was an early feminist and an early voice in the call for what would become the Reform movement in American Judaism.

Moses Mordecai apparently deferred to the wishes of his Episcopalian wives, and his branch of the family were thereafter Christian, though Moses' son Henry did later donate a portion of the Mordecai lands to found the first Jewish cemetery in Raleigh.

It was also sometime in Moses Mordecai's lifetime that the pronunciation of the family name Mordecai shifted from the traditional long *I* ending to a long *E*. This unique pronunciation is still used for the name of the house to this day.

The descendants of Moses Mordecai inhabited the house for five more generations, until the house was willed to the city in 1964, and it's now part of a public park.

The ghost that inhabits the house is said to be the spirit of Mary Willis Mordecai Turk, who lived from 1858 to 1937. She appears sporadically as an apparition dressed in a grey Nineteenth century dress. She can occasionally be heard playing the piano in the downstairs drawing room, and visitors to the house have occasionally seen a grey mist hovering near that piano.

Mordecai House was featured on an episode of the Sci-Fi Channel's *Ghost Hunters*, where the band of supernatural investigators and sometime plumbers displayed their usual degree of scientific and intellectual rigor by completely confusing the history of the house, thinking it was the birthplace of President Andrew Johnson, and then all coming down with food poisoning.

How to Get There

Mordecai House and Mordecai Historic Park are located at 1 Mimosa Court off of Wake Forrest Road in downtown Raleigh.

The Park is open to the public daily, and picnic tables are available, so grab one of the best hot dogs in the world from Snoopy's, also on Wake Forest Road, and make it a day. Guided tours of the buildings are available.

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In the 19th century William Poole owned vast tracts of wooded land South of Raleigh. Poole was a wealthy man, a mill owner, and above anything he loved trees and horses. Particularly he loved white horses, it was noted by all who knew him that he always rode a fine white horse.

Poole's other love was for the woods. Despite their value as timber, Poole let his woods grow wild and untouched. He loved to ride through the acres and acres of his woods, and in his will he specified that not a single one of his trees should ever be cut down.

During the Civil War, when Union troops marched into Raleigh, rumor spread that Poole had gold hidden on his estate. A small band of Union Troops heard the story, and hungry for plunder split off from their company to find Poole.

The soldiers cornered Poole in his home, but Poole denied the existence of any gold. The Northern Soldiers didn't like the answer, ad threatened to burn down his mill unless he handed over the treasure. Again, Poole denied there was a hoard of gold.

The soldiers still didn't believe him. The Union troops forced Poole to watch as his mill was burned to the ground, but Poole still protested there was no gold.

Poole was telling the truth, their was no gold, but the soldiers carried off something more precious to Poole than his gold.

To Poole's great dismay, the soldiers heard a whinnying coming from the nearby woods. Poole had hidden his prized white stallion in the woods to keep it out of the hands of the marauding soldiers.

The soldiers finally decided that Poole was telling the truth about the gold, and that it there was no treasure than the fine horse would have to do. Poole was heartbroken as he saw his precious companion being led away.

But after Poole died, it's said that his horse returned to him in spirit. For ears afterwards, a pale white rider on a pale white horse was seen galloping through the woods.

Eventually, greed won out over Poole's wishes and the trees in his precious forrest were cut down for timber. But perhaps Poole had his revenge on the people who destroyed his beloved forest — all of the trees were worthless, having rotted from the inside.

Poole's woods are long gone, but the tract of land where they once stood roughly follows the course of Poole Road in Southeast Raleigh.

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Ghost Rumored to Have Killed Ten Men Terrifies Village, Causes Political Trouble - Who Forted? Magazine

By Greg Newkirk on January 18, 2013

whofortedblog.com

The "Widow Ghost" caused villagers to display red shirts outside their homes for protection from the evil spirit.

A village has been living in fear of an infamous "Widow Ghost" blamed for deaths of at least ten men since last month, and their method of combating the paranormal monster is usually known for *getting* people killed, either by angry bulls or extraterrestrials with phasers: red shirts.

A spirit medium hired by the village of Tha Sawang to investigate the mysterious death of almost a dozen "strong, healthy men" since December, has come to the conclusion that they were killed by a terrifying "Widow Ghost", or the *pee mae mai*, a vengeful spirit out for blood. She warned that those homes with only one son risk a higher chance of an unwelcome visit from the angry spirit, and offered up a method of combat that involves hanging a red shirt outside the home, a gesture said to repel evil.

The "Widow Ghost" caused villagers to display red shirts outside their homes for protection from the evil spirit.

The ghost has caused such a panic in the area that even those who might not believe in such things have felt pressure to comply with the medium's demands for the sake of their neighbors.

"Some of the men who died did not show any sign of sickness, they were perfectly fine. When I heard about the rumour, I respected people's beliefs and put a red shirt on my front door as well," a 42 year old villager told *The Bangkok Post*.

The entire series of events is further complicated by the political pressure group United Front for Democracy Against Dictatorship (UDD), a group set up to oppose those who **supported the 2006 coup staged by Thailand's Royal Thai Army,** which the vast majority of citizens (84% or so) supported. Why is this a problem? Because the UDD's support symbol is a red shirt, which makes a whole lot of the ghost-fearing public seem like they're supporters of a widely disliked former government. Makes you wonder if the mysterious spirit medium had any ulterier motives.

The latest news is that the "Widow Ghost" has spread to at least two other districts, which could mean a lot more red shirts hung on a lot more front lawns.

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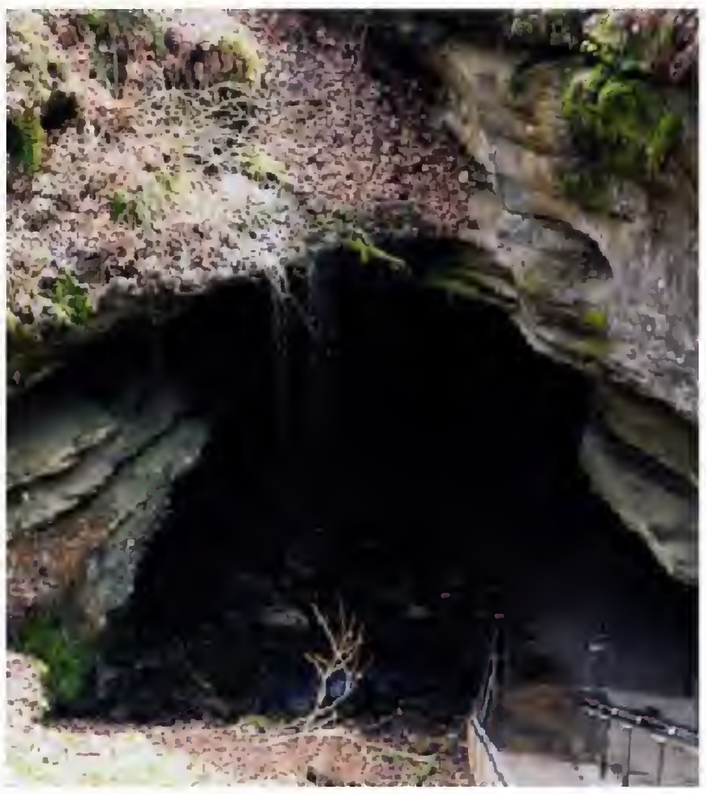
By J Nathan Couch on August 7, 2013



Wisconsin paranormal researcher J. Nathan Couch recently took a "legend trip" to Kentucky. Legend tripping is the act of visiting an allegedly haunted location to try and experience the legend for yourself. This is the third and final article in the series following Waverly Hills Sanatorium and the Pope Lick Monster.

The Mammoth Cave System is without a doubt the world's greatest subterranean wonder. Located in an area that's roughly only a few miles in diameter, the cave twists and turns and stretches to a length of some 400 miles and a depth of 30 stories, and that's only the explored tunnels. It's suspected hundreds of miles of cave remain to be discovered. Every weekend more exploration occurs and new mileage is recorded. The world's longest cave system literally becomes larger every single week.

Mammoth Cave is an astounding place that's definitely worthy of anyone's leisure time but what makes it worthy of a legend trip? The fact that's it reputedly the world's largest haunted place, with a macabre history stretching back to pre-history.

The first evidence of human beings exploring the pitch black halls of Mammoth Cave dates back 4,000 years ago when pre-historic Native Americans first dared to venture under the earth. There, with primitive stone tools and no light beyond what their small torches could cast, they mined the cave walls for its minerals. At some point these people began burying their dead inside the cave, as at least four bodies have been excavated since the 1800s. The dry mineral-rich environment of the cave turned each into perfectly preserved mummies, many of which were on display for certain amounts of time during the Cave's history of being a privately owned tourist attraction. The Natives continued to delve into the darkness for 2,000 years until their presence abruptly stops. No one has yet concluded why they abandoned the cave after two millennia.

In the late 1700s a member of the Houchin family found the cave while bear hunting. During the war of 1812 the cave was used as a saltpeter mine to aid in the production of gunpowder. After the war ended the cave became one of the nation's first tourist attractions once the mummies were discovered. This was a period in history when the mummies were believed to be members of a lost race of people, rather than Native American ancestors which added to the mystery of the place. Affluent citizens from all over the country would come to tour the caves.

In 1839, the cave was even witness to good-old fashioned 19th century Quackery. A medical doctor from Louisville named Frank Gorin established a small village for tuberculosis patients inside the cave. At this point in history, no one had the slightest clue how to treat this fatal

respiratory illness. Gorin believed that the pure air of the cave would help the lungs to battle infections. Those who didn't leave the cave after a few weeks of the stale, gloomy darkness of the cave, died. Some of those who did die were discovered by tourists, as the tour routes wound right through the TB village. Much of this TB "hospital" still stands and can be seen on certain present-day cave tours.

In 1905 legendary cosmic horror author H.P. Lovecraft wrote one his earliest stories using Mammoth Cave as a sitting. In "*The Beast in the Cave*" a tourist gets separated from the group and finds himself stalked by a vicious albino hominid.

During the early 1920's most of the caves were privately owned and more and more people were flocking to the area to vacation. So many entrances to the cave system had either been discovered or made, that dozens of caves were now competing for tourist dollars. A man named Floyd Collins owned a section called "Crystal Cave" but was losing out in what has now become known as the Kentucky Cave Wars. His cave was hard to get to and lacked lodging. He was losing money. Collins began excavating an entrance to Sand Cave, which he hoped would steal visitors from the then-privately owned Mammoth Cave. While excavating, an enormous boulder shifted, pinning him by the leg. He was found a day later and what followed was one of the nation's first and most morbid media frenzies. Radio and newspapers carried regular updates on Collins' predicament, and soon gawkers and well-wishers from all over were flocking to Central Kentucky to follow the drama. Hamburger and Hotdog stands popped up, and souvenirs were sold. Meanwhile rescuers were at a loss to move the boulder. Eventually, another cave-in occurred, blocking Collins off from all help. Now, he couldn't even be saved by amputation. After two weeks, Collins died alone from exposure.

Floyd Collins on display

Sad, huh? Collins' story doesn't end there. Floyd was eventually removed from the cave after several years and interred in a family cemetery. Floyd's father Lee sold the cave and property to a local dentist named Thomas, who somehow obtained permission to exhume Floyd's body and put it on display in a glass-lid coffin in the entrance to Sand Cave, where hundreds of tourists could gawk at his decaying corpse. It gets weirder. Eventually, Floyd's body was stolen—presumably by rival cave owners who were angry at the amount of tourists the body was attracting. After a few days his body was discovered in a field, minus one leg which was never recovered, and he was put back in his coffin in Sand Cave—now sans the viewing lid, though people still peeked inside. The National Park System bought Sand Cave in 1961 and closed the cave to tourists, but surprisingly,didn't give Floyd a proper burial until 1989.

Not surprisingly, a plethora of ghostly activity is said to occur here. In areas associated with Floyd Collin's grim demise, his voice has been heard calling for help, and objects have been thrown—it should be noted that in recent decades Floyd's caves have been found to be connected to Mammoth Cave. Throughout other areas of the cave system apparitions have been seen, usually of African Americans. The cave's earliest tour guides and explorers were all male African American slaves, and many even held church services with their families

inside certain chambers.

On July 28th, 2013, my wife and I visited the cave and I experienced… absolutely nothing—nothing paranormal anyways. Tour groups usually consist of 100 tourists and 2-4 park rangers. Though rangers have reported bizarre experiences on tours, so many people in a relatively confined space do not allow for many paranormal encounters. The cave itself however, was amazing, and though I didn't hear Floyd Collins' cries for help or see a ghostly tour guide from the 1800's, I left the cave in wonder.

Old Guides Cemetery

After eating some delicious homemade BBQ in nearby Cave City, my wife and I headed back to Mammoth Cave National Park for a free guided surface walk. The destination this afternoon was Old Guide's Cemetery, located very near the visitor's center. This cemetery is where many of the cave's first slave guides are buried, along with those who died in the long abandoned subterranean TB village. When we reached the cemetery I took photos of the graves, silently saying the guides names asking for a manifestation—nothing.

When the walk ended we decided that the legend trip had been a bust—though a fascinating and beautiful bust—and we would have to settle for the unbridled beauty of Mammoth Cave National Park. After looking over some brochures we decided the trail we'd like to hike before dark was Cedar Sink Trail. The trail is a 2 mile loop located about a 15 minute drive from the visitor's center. The cave system is formed as water is taken into the ground, and over thousands of years, carves out the granite and limestone beneath the earth. Cedar Sink is an area where the underground rivers briefly emerge before soaking back into the earth. By the time we reached the trail the sky was starting to dim. About a quarter of a mile down the trail, my wife half-joked we'd end up stranded on the trail past dark. I laughed and added, "Yeah, with a bunch of Kentucky Bigfoot and weird cave ghosts roaming around." She didn't think that was very funny, so I shut up and we continued on.

About 10 minutes later she spotted some unusual looking plants growing alongside the trail. Unable to decide what they were, she started on again. I lingered a moment, staring at the patch of plants and taking in the scenery, when I saw something the likes of which I've never seen. Suddenly, amongst the mystery plants I clearly saw a woman's face about three feet from the trail. Though I'm writing this article a full nine days after the encounter, I can still vividly picture it when I close my eyes. The woman appeared to be Caucasian or at the very least fair-skinned. She seemed to be in her late-20's or early-30's. Her hair was long and black, which she wore up in a bun, with one singular curl hanging down on her forehead. Her skin was a pale gray, her nose was thin, and her chin angular. The face was solid, but appeared flat and one dimensional. She wore a disinterested look on her face, reminiscent of faces from 19th Century photographs—a time when no one smiled for the camera because of exposure times that took minutes rather than split-seconds. For all intents and purposes it seemed like in the blink-of-an-eye someone had clipped a face from a vintage photo and

imposed it front of the plants.

Though my description is lengthy, I probably only saw the face for a full second. Immediately after seeing the face I turned to follow my wife. It was as though my mind couldn't interpret what I had seen quickly enough to keep my eyes on it. I immediately turned back to the plants and exclaimed "The Hell?!" My wife turned around alarmed and asked me what I had seen. I ignored her for several seconds and continued staring at the area, while I assume, she became thoroughly concerned about my mental health. When I finally told her what I saw, she began to get frightened, so I began to downplay the whole thing and we continued on our walk. I had no clue how long it'd take us to walk an unfamiliar two-mile trail, and I didn't want her to have something to fixate one if we ended up walking back in the dark.

Since this event occurred, I've thought about it over-and-over again. The only times I've ever thought I saw an apparition was in my peripheral vision; something one can easily explain away. Though my sighting was brief, it was extremely vivid, I was looking right at it, the face was substantial, and it occurred in more-or-less broad daylight—twilight was still roughly 45 minutes to an hour away. I suppose it could have been a hallucination. Perhaps for reasons I don't understand my mind pulled some stock-image from my subconscious memory. I've an interest in genealogy and antique stores, so old photographs are something I'm familiar with. However, this woman's face didn't seem familiar to me at all, and I've no clue why my mind would choose such a seemingly random image to display. Was it because I was subconsciously thinking about the alleged ghosts of Mammoth Cave? If so, you'd expect I would have imagined a white male like Floyd Collins, or at the very least an African American since that's what is normally reported in the caves.

We continued our walk, marveled at Cedar Sink, and narrowly avoided a confrontation with a bear—we found large, fresh tracks on the trail as we hiked back out—but we didn't experience anything else paranormal. If there is a moral this story, it's that ghosts appear in unlikely places.

Between this one-in-a-lifetime experience and all my experiences at Waverly Hills Sanatorium in Louisville, my trip to Kentucky will live in my memory as the greatest legend trip ever. Kentucky, I will be back.

About J Nathan Couch

J. Nathan Couch is an author and paranormal investigator. He is part of the Wisconsin-based Paranormal Investigation and Research Society, and guides ghost walks and bus tours in support of Washington County Paranormal. His new book Goatman: Flesh or Folklore? is available now.

8 Comments

1. Bethany

go to Joppa Ridge Church.

2. EP Ramos

November 26, 2013 at ^:38 PM interesting article. I don't think MagLev system would go anywhere near Mammoth Cave antho an Elvis movie depicts a military base somewhere in Appalachia.

3. NA

October 31, 2013 at 2:53 am

this is a nice article. I live in Cave City and my friends and I often visit the Mammoth Cave Church. A few years back, we were just messing around to see if anything would happen inside the church. and out of no where a table flew across the room. we checked it for strings or anything at all that could give an explanation but nothing. no one was even near it at the time. We haven't been back since. Since then though, I have heard that there was a ghost hunting tour there and the people said there is at least one evil spirit there. Im not going back anytime soon.

- Nathan

  Awesome story. I ate some amazing fried Chicken in Cave City just prior to my encounter!

4. a

Or it could just be a combination of leaves, shadows, highlights, etc, that looked somewhat face like and your brain filled in the details. Since that is what a brain does. And you were looking for and wanting something just like this to happen. If you and I were to see this same thing no doubt my reaction would be: "that's funny, it kinda looks like a face" and it would very soon be forgot.

- Nathan

  I've had many experiences where I summed it all up to watch you describe (matrixing), however this was vivid. I still can plainly see the face I saw that day. Perhaps it was some amazing hallucination, but it wasn't matrixing.

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Seven Hearths is a beautiful historic home located on King Street in the historic district of Hillsborough. The house dates from sometime in the earlier half of the Eighteenth Century, and was originally built as a tavern. William Reed's Ordinary distilled and served spirits to the public from Colonial times into the early days of the Republic. The tavern shut down sometime before the beginning of the Nineteenth Century, when the house became a private residence and began being called Seven Hearths.

According to legend, it was also sometime in the Nineteenth Century that the house acquired its first ghost. According to a family tradition, the ghost of a girl named Jane Hayes haunts the property.

The Hayes family lived in the home from the early Nineteenth Century to the middle of the Twentieth. Jane was a beloved daughter who died of consumption in the home when she was only sixteen in 1854. Ever since then, residents in the house have reported seeing the transparent figure of a girl with long, flowing, blonde hair, wearing a wispy nightgown and wandering from room to room. Passers-by on the street have also reported seeing the figure of a young girl staring out of an upstairs window.

The second ghost is a much more odd apparition. Said to be another member of the Hayes family, this one a Dr. William Hayes, who practiced out of the building in the 1920s.

William Hayes was a devoted spiritualist, who believed that humans were reincarnated as animals after death. Hayes seems to have gotten halfway there, as his spirit has been seen roaming the halls of Seven Hearths in the form of a large tabby cat with the head of a man.

When they sold the house, the Hayes family let the new owners know about the ghosts. Both apparitions kept appearing occasionally to the new residents for decades, and came to be thought of as member of a slightly odd extended family.

Seven Hearths has recently changed hands again, and the new owners have lovingly restored the exterior of the home to something closer to what it looked like when it was William Reed's Ordinary. While the new owners haven't yet said whether or not they've seen the ghosts, they have done a wonderful job capturing the spirit of this lovely historic building.

The thost of a young girl can sometimes be seen staring from an upstairs window in this historic Hillsborough Home

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The Biltomre Estate, located in Asheville, was a vacation home for George Washington Vanderbilt, one of the heirs to the Vanderbilt industrial fortune. George Vanderbilt spent a significant part of that inheritance constructing the estate, including building out a private railway line to bring his family and guests to the estate. The hose is the largest privately owned home in America. At the Biltmore House you could sleep in a different room each night and never sleep in the same room twice for an entire year. Now open to the public, the house, the surrounding estate, the winery, and the related attractions make Biltomre one of the biggest tourist attractions in North Carolina. The gorgeous home and its surrounding gardens have been featured in multiple movies, from the Peter Sellers' classic *Being There*, to the less well-remembered *Hot Heir*, starring Raleigh's own perennial political candidate and Guppy The Clown Ron Campbell. But some visitors to the Biltmore House have seen even stranger things.

George Washington Vanderbilt was fortunate enough to have been born in to a life that offered him staggeringly vast amounts of money at his disposal that he didn't have to lift a single finger to earn. In 1886 he travelled to Asheville with his mother and decided, at the tender age of twenty six, that he was fond enough of the area to want to build a vacation home there. Thinking something with a little yard would be nice, he purchased 125,000 acres and began construction on what would become the Biltmore Estate.

George Vanderbilt was an avid collector of books, art, and artifacts. He and his wife Edith used Biltmore to host lavish parties and entertain guests over extended stays. Vanderbilt spent a considerable amount of time in his library at Biltmore, pouring over some rare edition or other. When he died in 1914, his estate passed through his daughter to his grandsons, and it was they who decided to open the estate to the public. Ever since then, staff and visitors at the Biltmore have reported that the Vanderbilt family still may be at the Biltmore.

George Vanderbilt's ghost is sad to be seen in the library, usually when the skies are dark and there is an oncoming storm. During his life, Vanderbilt actively oversaw the management of the vast estate and would retreat into the library if he was out riding and saw a storm approaching. His ghost may be continuing this habit, and the ghost of his wife may also be continuing to play her part. Edith Vanderbilt was known to personally journey down to the library to remind him it was time to join his guests. Today, many people passing through the library have reported hearing a woman's voice whisper the name "George."

The parties may still be going on as well. There have been reports of the sounds of splashing and laughter coming from the estate's now-empty swimming pool. It may be these supernatural swim parties that Edith Vanderbilt summons her husband to from the library.

If the Vanderbilts are indeed continuing their lavish existence into the afterlife, it may be evidence that while you may not be able to take it with you, you also don't necessarily have to leave it all behind.

How to Get There

The Biltmore Estate is located in Asheville and is accessible from clearly marked exits off both I-40 and I-26. Just follow the signs. The house is open year-round, some other attractions on the estate are seasonal.

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Giant mystery creature spotted off the coast of New Zealand

00:18 EST, 15 December 2014 |
00:18 EST, 15 December 2014
dailymail.co.uk

Too big to be a shark and too fast for a whale... So what is the mystery creature captured by Google Earth off the coast of New Zealand?

- **Engineer Pita Witehira spotted a large unexplained wake about a week ago**
- **He was looking at Oke Bay, in the Bay of Islands, an area on the east coast of the Far North District of New Zealand's North Island**
- **It wasn't caused by a boat because there is no white foam from a motor**
- **Mr Witehira also doesn't think a shark or whale could have caused it**

A giant mystery sea creature is thought to have been spotted in the turquoise waters of one of New Zealand's most idyllic bays.

A huge unexplained wake can be seen in a Google Earth image of Oke Bay, in the Bay of Islands, an area on the east coast of the Far North District of the country's North Island, captured by satellite at about 11.30am on January 30.

Engineer Pita Witehira, who spotted the wake while on Google Earth researching for his holiday home, told Daily Mail Australia the wake could have been left by a creature around 12 metres in size.

A long swirled wake was spotted on Google Earth in Oke Bay, part of the Bay of Islands in New Zealand

Pita Witehira said the wake could have been left by a creature around 12 metres in size

Mr Witehira, from Hamilton, New Zealand, said: 'The Native Maori would call this a "Taniwha" ('Troll') as it appears not to be a whale and it is far too big to be a shark. It is moving too fast and turning too sharply to be a whale.'

Mr Witehira also ruled out that a boat was the cause of the wake because there is no white froth like normal wakes created by motors.

'I spotted it about a week ago. We have some property near Oke Bay and I'm about to build a beach chalet up there, I zoomed down and found that,' he said.

'It's way too wide for a shark and way too long... It's got to have a lot of weight under the water to create that kind of drag.'

Engineer Pita Witehira spotted the wake while on Google Earth about a week ago

When compared to the white wake that a motoriesd boat in the area makes it is clear to see they are very different

Oke Bay has a quite white sand beach and the water stays shallow for around 40 metres 'with a sudden deep drop into the bay'.

'There is a lot of undergrowth in the deeper parts of the Bay,' Mr Witehira explained.

The unusual sighting comes after an aerial photograph appeared to show a giant crab that was at least 50ft-wide lurking in shallow water in England.

The incredible image, shared online in October, could soon have visitors flocking to the seaside town of Whistable, in Kent, in the hope of catching Britain's biggest crab.

While some insist it is proof of 'Crabzilla', others argue that the shadowy figure is nothing more than an unusually-shaped sandbank - or is simply a playful hoax.

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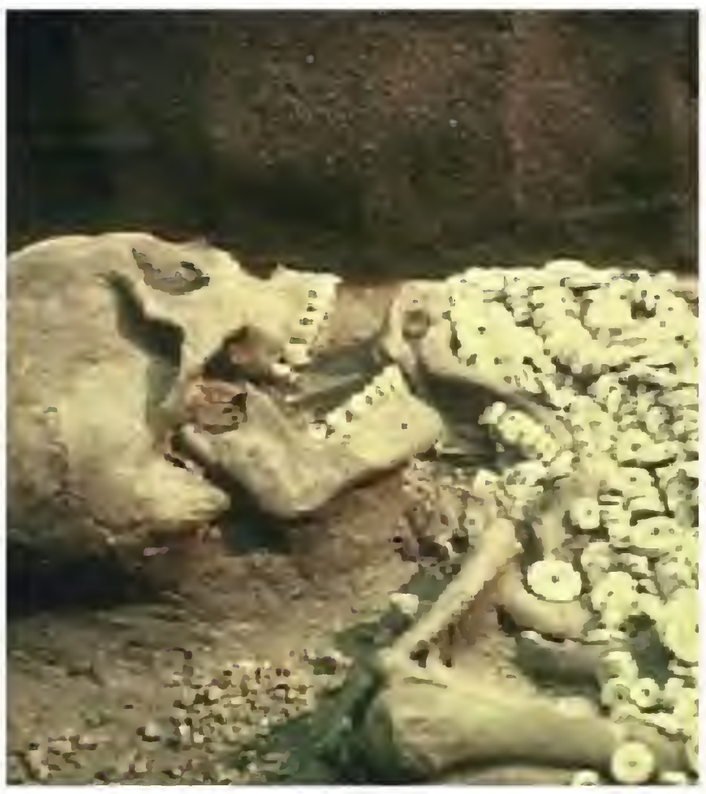
Giant Skeletons in Wisconsin: Remains of the Mound Builders

cultofweird.com

By Charlie Hintz on November 16, 2014



In recent years, research by Jim Vieira and others into historical claims of giant human skeletons has reinvigorated the interest (and controversy) in a topic that is widely discounted as pseudoscience.

My interest in the subject began where it has for many – with the mention of giants in the ancient texts commonly referred to as the book of Genesis. It is easy to disregard these antediluvian tales of an extraordinary race of giants produced through the coupling of celestial beings with human females. When these stories were first told, humanity was still huddling in dark caves and making offerings to the various gods and spirits who governed their fates.

However, stories of giants are not exclusive to archaic origin stories fabricated by ancient cultures to make sense of a world without scientific understanding.

It seems that around the turn of the century, human skeletons measuring unnatural heights were being unearthed all over America, often from the burial mounds of an unknown people we call Effigy Mound Builders.

If the media of the time is to be believed, Wisconsin has yielded several unique and significant clues to the giant skeleton mystery. This may be due to the numerous animal effigy mounds all across the state, as well as a large population of Middle Mississippian mound builders who flourished in the area for four hundred years before they vanished.

Aztalan: Wisconsin City of the Mound Builders

Photo: Joshua Mayer/Creative Commons

Aztalan mound in Wisconsin

The remnants of a city built around a large central mound was discovered near Madison in 1835. The city, known as Aztalan, is believed to have flourished from 900-1300, possibly serving as a northern outpost for the much larger city of Cahokia in present-day Illinois.

Most of the Aztalan mounds were destroyed in the late 1800s, whatever relics to be found taken by treasure hunters. One disturbed mound was found to contain the remains of a young female now called the Princess of Aztalan. She was found to have a slight deformation in her spinal column, which may have caused her to be more highly regarded. She was wrapped in belts of seashells, some coming from as far away as the Gulf of Mexico.

Though she was of average height, the princess is one of only a few burials discovered in the area, which include a headless male and five cremated remains. There are rumors of a giant skeleton unearthed in the area, but I haven't found any reports to corroborate it.

Aztalan Princess skeleton found in Wisconsin burial mound

Though not a giant, the Aztalan Princess is unique amongst Wisconsin mound burials.

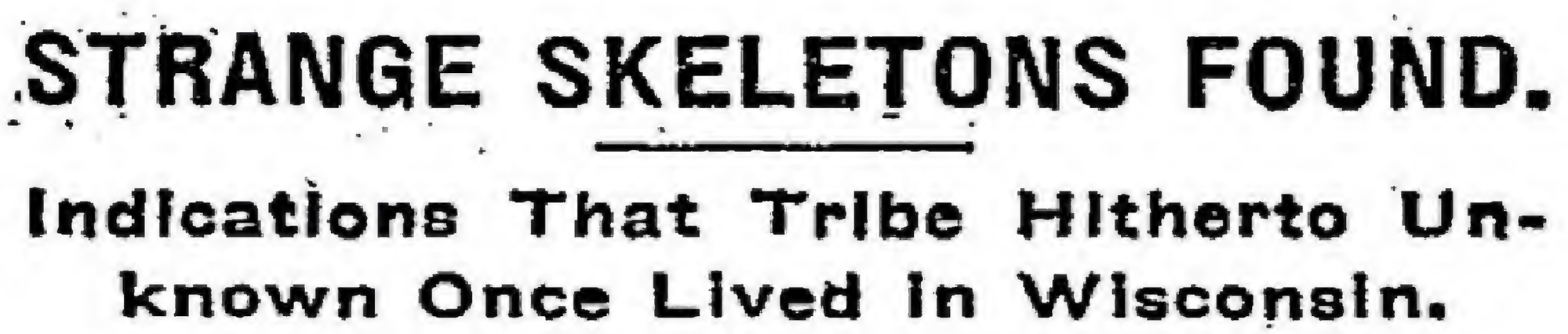
In 1891, the New York Times reported that Smithsonian scientists excavating the Aztalan site had discovered three pyramid-shaped mounds in nearby Rock Lake, which are believed to have been built by the inhabitants of Aztalan.

Maple Creek Giant

A New York Times article published December 20, 1897 reported the discovery of a giant human skeleton in the largest of three recently discovered mounds in Maple Creek, WI. The article states the skeleton measure over nine feet from head to foot and the skull was "as large as a half bushel measure." Tempered copper rods and other relics were found with the bones.

The two remaining mounds were going to be "excavated soon." What was found in them, and where is the giant now?

18 Skeletons Found Near Lake Delavan



STRANGE SKELETONS FOUND.

Indications That Tribe Hitherto Unknown Once Lived in Wisconsin.

New York Times reports on 18 giant skeletons found near Lake Delavan in Wisconsin

The May 4th, 1912 edition of the New York Times reported what might be one of the strangest giant skeleton discoveries of all. An excavation of one large mound on Lake Fawn Farm near Lake Delavan revealed the skeletal remains of eighteen individuals measuring between 7.6 and 10 feet. The "heretofore unknown race of men" were found to have six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot, as well as double rows of teeth in their large,

elongated skulls.

"From directly over the eye sockets," the article states, "the head slopes straight back and the nasal bones protrude far above the cheek bones. The jaw bones are long and pointed, bearing a minute resemblance to the head of the monkey. The teeth in the front of the jaw are regular molars."

It goes on to say that other remains, presumably of women, were found with smaller heads but similar characteristics. The remains were found embedded in charcoal and covered with layers of baked clay to shed water from the sepulchre.

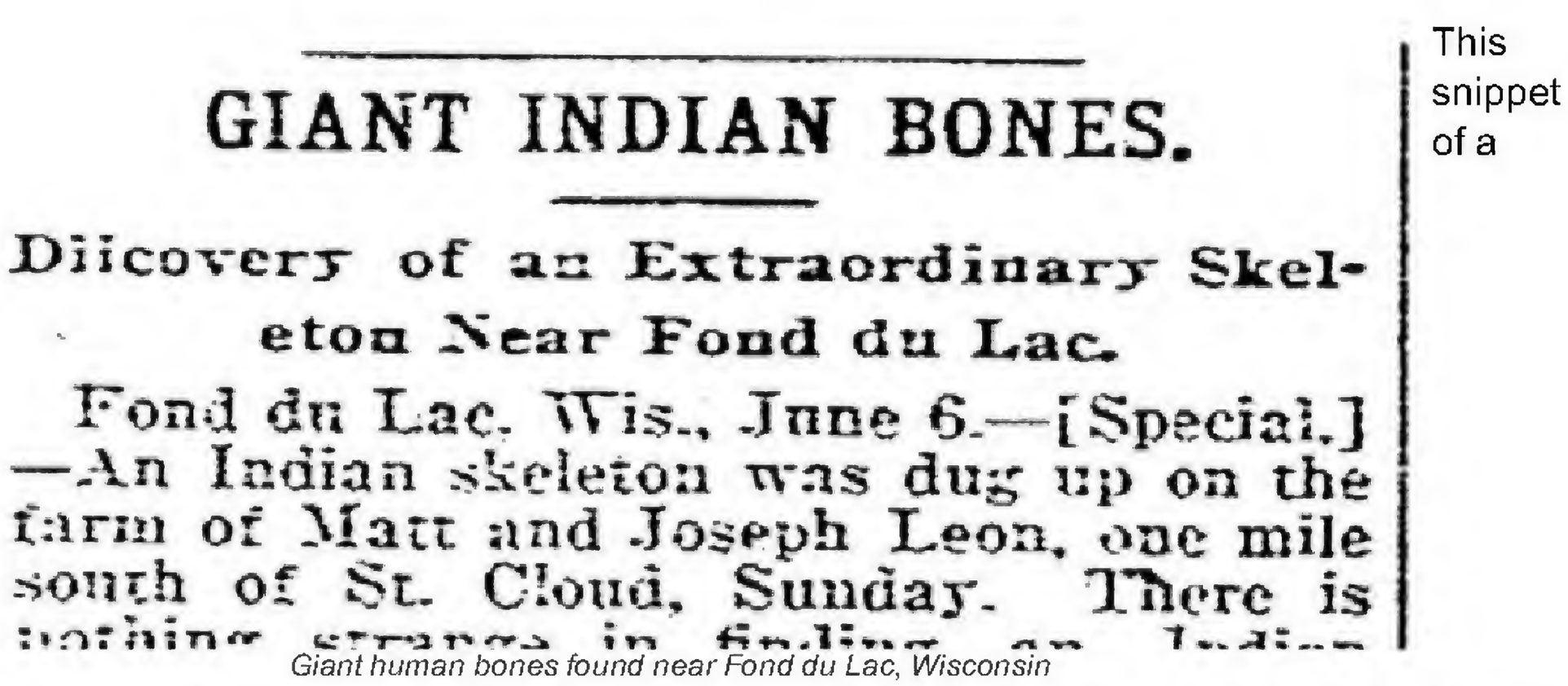
Lizard Mound Skeleton in West Bend

While researching his book Washington County Paranormal, author J. Nathan Couch uncovered an account of a giant skeleton discoverd right here in our backyard.

I was fascinated by Lizard Mound County Park, just outside of West Bend, WI, ever since my first visit when I was very young. At the time, an installation constructed by the Milwaukee Public Museum provided a window into one mound, showing the bones and artifacts as they were originally buried.

Though those bones were of normal size, larger bones were accidentally unearthed by farmers in another nearby mound. Read the account of that find: Giant Skeleton Unearthed by Wisconsin Farmers in 1912

Giant Indian Bones Found Near Fond Du Lac



GIANT INDIAN BONES.

Diicovery of an Extraordinary Skeleton Near Fond du Lac.

Fond du Lac, Wis., June 6.—[Special.] —An Indian skeleton was dug up on the farm of Matt and Joseph Leon, one mile south of St. Cloud, Sunday. There is

Giant human bones found near Fond du Lac, Wisconsin

This snippet of a newspaper so far is the only thing I have found on the topic of a giant skeleton being found near Fond du Lac, Wisconsin.

Have you heard any stories of strange giant skeletons being found in Wisconsin? Tell me about it in the comments below.

About Charlie Hintz

Cult of Weird founder and curator of the bizarre. Send weird news, photos and videos to: info@cultofweird.com Follow on: Facebook | Twitter | Pinterest | Google+

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Glawackus

wikia.com

The **Glawackus** is a creature seen in Glastonbury, CN and Frizzelburg, MA and is in the traditions of lumberjacks. In the latter incident it is reported to have attacked livestock. It is said to have a strong resemblance to a mix between a bear, panther, and lion. An eyewitness report states that "I was working as a young reporter on the Hartford Courant that year when **World War II** was in the wings. But we were preoccupied with the developing story about this Glastonbury creature that howled at night, slipped in and out of view and caused dogs, cats and small farm animals to disappear. As the sightings grew in number, so did the variety of descriptions. First it was a huge cat. Then some people reported what looked like a dog in back and a cat in front. Others saw it vice-versa. One man called to say he had seen a big animal in the pitch dark with eyes that glowed like embers. It was clear to us that this weird, unknown animal needed a name. One editor coined the word, Glawackus. "Gla" for Glastonbury; "wack" for wacky; and "us" as a proper Latin ending. It caught on like magic." A safari was organized with 2 Ozark trained hounds, but was unsuccessful.

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Gold bars 'swapped for painted lead bricks' in bank vault

Lizzie Dearden
Tuesday 23 December 2014

independent.co.uk

Gold bars held in a vault at a Ukrainian bank have been swapped for lead bricks covered in golden paint, it has emerged.

The Central Bank in the southern port city of Odessa was allegedly conned into buying the fake bullion by a member of staff, who used it to conceal the theft of the real bars.

The state's Ministry of Internal Affairs has announced an investigation into the heist, which could involve up to 11kg of missing gold worth almost £270,000.

"The management of the central bank's branch in Odessa asked us to investigate fraud by their employee," Volodymyr Shablienko, head of the Odessa police's press office, told *Bloomberg News*. "We are conducting a forensic audit now."

A bank employee passed lead bars covered with golden paint to the storage unit, registering them as gold, Ukraine's *Vesti* newspaper reported, adding that the suspect has fled to Crimea.

The con prompted a decision by Ukraine's national bank not to buy precious metals over the counter because of issues with authenticity.

Criminal proceedings began on 18 December, months after the scam reportedly took place between August and October.

Odessa has seen outbursts of violence and rioting since the Ukrainian conflict started following the ousting of President Viktor Yanukovych.

At least 46 people died in a fire and clashes between pro-government protesters and separatists in May as pro-Russian rebels took control of swathes of eastern Ukraine.

The strategic port has remained under Ukrainian control through the conflict but it is believed to be a target for the separatists, who continue battling government forces despite a ceasefire signed by both sides in September.

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Grass linked to Texas cattle deaths

CBS News June 25, 2012, 2:19 PM

cbsnews.com

Updated Mon. 2:11 p.m. ET

(CBS News) ELGIN, Texas - A mysterious mass death of a herd of cattle has prompted a federal investigation in Central Texas.

Preliminary test results are blaming the deaths on the grass the cows were eating when they got sick, reports CBS Station KEYE.

The cows dropped dead several weeks ago on an 80-acre ranch owned by Jerry Abel in Elgin, just east of Austin.

Abel says he's been using the fields for cattle grazing and hay for 15 years. "A lot of leaf, it's good grass, tested high for protein - it should have been perfect," he told KEYE correspondent Lisa Leigh Kelly.

The grass is a hybrid form of Bermuda known as Tifton 85 which has been growing here for 15 years, feeding Abel's 18 head of Corriente cattle. Corriente are used for team roping because of their small size and horns.

"When we opened that gate to that fresh grass, they were all very anxious to get to that," said Abel.

Three weeks ago, the cattle had just been turned out to enjoy the fresh grass, when something went terribly wrong.

"When our trainer first heard the bellowing, he thought our pregnant heifer may be having a calf or something," said Abel. "But when he got down here, virtually all of the steers and heifers were on the ground. Some were already dead, and the others were already in convulsions."

Within hours, 15 of the 18 cattle were dead.

"That was very traumatic to see, because there was nothing you could do, obviously, they were dying," said Abel.

Preliminary tests revealed the Tifton 85 grass, which has been here for years, had suddenly started producing cyanide gas, poisoning the cattle.

"Coming off the drought that we had the last two years ... we're concerned it was a combination of events that led us to this," Dr. Gary Warner, an Elgin veterinarian and cattle specialist who conducted the 15 necropsies, told Kelly.

What is more worrisome: Other farmers have tested their Tifton 85 grass, and several in Bastrop County have found their fields are also toxic with cyanide. However, no other cattle have died.

Scientists at the U.S. Department of Agriculture are dissecting the grass to determine if there might have been some strange, unexpected mutation.

Until it can be determined why this grass suddenly began producing cyanide, Abel is keep his livestock far away.

"The grasshoppers are enjoying it now," he said.

CORRECTION: *As originally published, this story referred to Tifton 85 grass as a genetically-modified product, which is incorrect; it is actually a hybrid of Bermuda grass.*

Grass tied to Texas cattle deaths hybrid, not GM

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Grave of Confederate soldier dug up in Georgia

wrcbtv.com

KNOXVILLE, Ga. (AP) - Authorities in Georgia say the grave of a Confederate soldier has been dug up and investigators are working to determine whether anything has been stolen.

Crawford County Sheriff Lewis Walker on Thursday said a grave is at the Old Bethel Church Cemetery in Knoxville and belonged to James Nichols.

WMAZ-TV reports historical records show Nichols was captured in Vicksburg, Mississippi, on July 4, 1863, and died Nov. 9, 1866. Crawford told the Telegraph of Macon that Nichols was a first lieutenant in the Confederate Army and the suspects may have been looking for artifacts that were buried with him.

Walker says authorities are trying to locate Nichols' relatives and the Georgia Bureau of Investigation has been called to help inspect the grave's contents.

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Group Files Lawsuit Against Kansas For Teaching Science In Science Class | IFLScience

iflscience.com

December 30, 2014 | by Stephen Luntz

A group with the deeply Orwellian name Citizens for Objective Public Education (COPE) have lost their lawsuit to stop the Kansas State Board of Education teaching evolution.

If this sounds familiar, it is because we have been here before. Quite a few times, actually. However, in defiance of their ideology, creationists keep evolving new approaches in response to the courts' determination that you can't will away a mountain of scientific evidence based on your interpretation of a single ancient book.

The cause of this latest flare-up is a result of the Next Generation Science Standards drawn up by 26 states in cooperation with the National Research Council. The standards are based on the idea that, "Science—and therefore science education—is central to the lives of all Americans, preparing them to be informed citizens in a democracy and knowledgeable consumers." As previous guidelines for science standards are at least 15 years old, it was considered time for an update.

COPE's novel argument was that evolution promotes atheism, whose teaching violates the separation of the church and state. How this squares with the more frequent claim that the Intelligent Design is not religious, since the "designer" does not have to be God, is unclear. John Calvert, an attorney for COPE is also founder of the Intelligent Design Network.

"The state's job is simply to say to students, 'How life arises continues to be a scientific mystery and there are competing ideas about it,'" Calvert said when launching the case.

COPE's lawsuit expressed concerns that the Standards will lead, "Very young children to ask ultimate questions about the cause and nature of life and the universe – where do we come from." This is bad, apprently, because the Standards then allegedly use, "A variety of deceptive devices and methods that will lead them to answer the questions with only materialistic/atheistic explanations." Presentation of scientific evidence now being classified as a "deceptive device".

The case gained plenty of attention when it was first brought in September 2013. However, its dismissal by US District Judge Daniel Crabtree earlier this month was much lower profile. Strangely, COPE doesn't even mention that they lost on their website.

Crabtree ruled that COPE had not shown any injury, beyond an "abstract stigmatic injury," from students learning science.

Kansas has a reputation as a center for extreme conservatism and has a particularly strong anti-science movement. Nevertheless, it is one of only 12 states that have so far adopted the Next Generation Standards, while the Wyoming legislature has blocked their introduction. If that is not disturbing enough, the Wyoming decision was a compromise – the original proposal wanted sought to ban *any* new science standards at all.

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Haggis

image

The wild Haggis (plural: Haggi) lives in the highlands of Scotland. It is round, four-legged, fur-covered, and usually less than a foot in length (comparable in size to a grouse). It is a shy creature, rarely seen, and for this reason there is great disagreement about its exact morphology and habits. For instance, many who claim to be Haggis experts say that the legs of the Haggis are longer on one side of its body than the other, in order to allow it to better stand on the steep slopes of the highlands. As a consequence, the haggis can only run around hills in one direction, and to catch one you simply run around the hill in the opposite direction. If true, this morphological feature would make the Haggis a cousin of the American Sidehill Gouger. However, other Haggis observers deny this to be true, insisting that all the legs of the Haggis are of equal length.

Some Haggis-ologists speculate that the Haggis is related to the Australian duck-billed platypus, being a descendant of migratory platypuses who found themselves trapped in Scotland during the last ice age and evolved to become highly adapted to its cold, damp weather.

To catch a Haggis it is advised to disguise your scent with liberal amounts of whisky, and then adopt a stumbling gait, swerving from side to side, so that the animal won't see you coming. Many stores in Scotland also sell Haggis Whistles. It is claimed that "in skilled hands this whistle can perfectly mimic the mating call of the Haggis."

It is sometimes said that Haggis is actually a traditional Scottish dish made from the heart, liver, and lungs of a sheep, mixed with oatmeal, suet, and seasonings, and boiled in the stomach of the animal. This is simply not true.

Comments

Haggis hunters wait
Haggis hears nothing then whack!
Eat the wee puddins
Posted by James Galvin on Sun Oct 01, 2006 at 11:17 AM

Shy ,furry haggis
lover of the highland glens
stay safe in your den
Posted by J on Thu Oct 05, 2006 at 03:21 PM

Haggis scamper near!
Drunk from my whisky vapors
clockwize 'round the rock.
Posted by DaveO on Tue Nov 14, 2006 at 05:09 PM

fat-filled sheep tummy
furry creature of the hills
Hogmanay dinner.
Posted by #1F in NNVA on Wed Nov 22, 2006 at 08:56 PM

i love this website, but i'm going tohave to tell you that Haggis is in fact the scottish meal of a sheep's heart, liver and lungs.
lol
i have had it, it's not so good.
Posted by rebecca smith in UK on Thu Aug 23, 2007 at 01:32 PM
"Not so good" ?! How can anyone say it's "not so good" ? Honestly, sometimes I just can't *gulp* understand you people
grin Posted by A-z in BG on Thu Jan 03, 2008 at 08:36 AM
The haggis is a highland delicacy. However it is an extremely
Posted by Robert Renfrew in uk on Wed Nov 05, 2008 at 08:22 PM
Haggis is delicacy? Could've fooled me I guess. Its like people who each cow balls. You have to grow up with it, then it "normal". N64 emulator
Posted by skanky on Fri Jan 16, 2009 at 12:30 AM
you can adopt a haggis at http://adoptahaggis.webs.com
Posted by darren clark in scotland on Tue Jul 07, 2009 at 06:32 AM
There is a species related to the shorter-legs-on-one-side-haggis that dwells in the mountains of France, called dahu or darou depending on the region.
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dahu
some say it is a fake, but I saw a whole flock of them darou during holidays in the Vosges mountains. They have whiskers in the Vosges, unlike on the wikipedia illustration, which shows an alpine dahu with a fur color mimicking a chamois' in order to trick the dahu hunters.
Posted by M in France on Fri Nov 01, 2013 at 05:29 AM

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The Haunted Hot Springs

Hot Springs is a quiet little town nestled deep in the Blue Ridge, just North of Asheville and Just South of the Tennessee border. The French Broad River cuts through the town, making it a draw for paddlers and kayakers. The Town gets its name from the natural hot springs which bubble up from the ground. The waters, renowned for their natural healing properties, brought tourists to Hot Springs to take the waters throughout the nineteenth century. The springs are reported to have mystical healing properties, and and something of a mildly supernatural aura permeates the entire town. Hot Springs has been called where Mayberry meets The Twilight Zone.

Perhaps its something about this aura that seems to be doing its best from keeping Hot Springs from getting too big. Over the years, two grand hotels have been built near the springs, both of which came to ruin.

Patton's White House, which was built in 1837, had 350 rooms and a dining room that could seat 600.The hotel also boasted the largest ballroom in North Carolina, ad was a destination for the well-to-do tourist until it burned to the ground in the middle of the century.

Its successor, the Mountain Park Inn, was built in 1886 and was an even grander. This 200 room hotel with a nine-hole golf course and sixteen marble baths fed by the springs.

The Mountain Park Hotel bumed to the ground 1n 1920

But tho Mountain Park inn also burned to the ground in 1920. Something seemed intent on keeping Hot Springs from getting too crowded.

The warm waters flowing from the earth were sacred to the Cherokee, and a few miles down the river is the important Cherokee religious site of Paint Rock. Ever since the 19th Century, people have reported seeing the figure of a Cherokee man walking in the woods near the river and the springs.

The Hot Springs are once again open for business, only now on a much smaller scale than the grand hotels of the past. The water flowing from the springs is pumped into a series of sheltered hot tub along the banks of the French Broad. It's said that the ghost of the Cherokee keeps his eyes on these, and a number of surprised soakers have even reported the ghost slipping into the tub next to them!

Is there some remnant of energy from when Hot Springs was Cherokee sacred ground that's keeping development in check? Today, Hot Springs is a magnet for artists and spiritual seekers, all of whom seem to agree there is something unique about the feeling of the town. The town is also once again a booming tourist attraction, and starting to grow. Maybe something will let us know if it gets too big.

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Headline of the Year: Villagers Decapitate Goblin, House Explodes - Who Forted? Magazine

By Greg Newkirk on January 28, 2013 whofortedblog.com

One traditional healer from Zimbabwe is dead and another is lucky to be alive after surviving a home explosion that killed four other people. Possibly related to the blast was the beheading of a "money-spinning" goblin taking place on the premises. You are reading this correctly.

Clever Kamuyedza, a transport operator, approached 24- year old Speakmore Mandere, one of Chitungwiza's healers more poularly known as Sekuru Shumba, seeking help to dispose of a "troubling goblin" he had aquired in another country for the purpose of good fortune. After the goblin began making "extreme demands" of him, he decided that maybe owning a goblin wasn't a good idea. For a mere $15,000, Mandere offered to take care of the issue through a cleansing ceremony, the climax of which would end with the decapitation of the goblin.

"The tragedy fell upon us while we were conducting the ceremony to dispose of the goblin that this businessman brought to Sekuru Shumba," Clara Banda, another healer involved in the ritual, told *Newsdze Zimbabwe*. "After assembling the team, Sekuru Shumba invited Mr Kamuyedza, his wife and two of their associates to his home for consultation. The consultations lasted three days during which we discussed whether or not we could handle this kind of ritual."

In the end, Shumba and company believed that the dangerous goblin disposal was worth the money, and went ahead with the plan. According to eyewitnesses on the scene, after a bit of struggle, the goblin's head was promptly lopped off and Kamuyedza's wife left the residence to gather the 15 grand from their vehicle when Shumba began screaming for help. The goblin, sans head, began fighting back. Then the house exploded.

"All I remember after that is a loud sound coming from the bedroom. The walls of the house crumbled. Virginia (her neighbor) and I struggled to get outside," Banda said.

The blast ended up killing five people and damaging a dozen homes. One villager describes the scene:

"A cloud of smoke went up into the air. Sekuru Shumba was lying motionless. The businessman was also dead. At that moment, a tenant at the house, Mai Kelly, was looking for her daughter whose corpse was later retrieved under a bed. Limbs and other human parts were strewn all over."

The local bomb squad and ballistics teams have been called in to assess the situation and determine the cause of the mysterious blast, but are so far at a loss.

It's only January and we already have the best story of the year. Thanks to our pal Micah Hanks over at the **Gralien Report** for tipping this to us!

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Newkirk.

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5
Esther Inglis-Arkell
Filed to: biochemistry
Today 8:00am

1

Probably not, unless you're well over 100 years old. In the 1800s, arsenic began being marketed as a health supplement, even though it had been a known poison for thousands of years. So why were people suddenly eating it on purpose?

The Arsenic Eaters

Styria, in the southeast of Austria, is a nice place to go these days. In the 1800s, it was the residence of the arsenic-eaters, and by many accounts, it was still a very nice place to go. Adventurers and scientists who traveled to the area mentioned that the inhabitants consumed "ratsbane" with their coffee. The fashion was to take ever increasing amounts a few times a week until diarrhea set in, then decrease the dosage. Men and women took arsenic, sometimes in a dose large enough to kill a healthy human being, to clarify their complexions and help them breathe more easily. Scientists observed that it seemed to do them no harm, writing, "They are generally strong and healthy persons, courageous, pugnacious, and of strong sexual dispositions. "

So that settles that.

The Effects of Arsenic

Today, people are no longer impressed with the health benefits of arsenic, inside Austria or outside of it. Not only does it cause cell death, but even low doses of it increase a person's risk of cancer. Whenever natural arsenic has leaked into the drinking water of communities, cancer rates have sky-rocketed.

Expand

But there is some indication that a people can build up a tolerance for arsenic. Certain towns in the Argentinian Andes, for example, are built on bedrock full of arsenic. The communities there are old, and so is the chemical beneath them. Archaeologists there have examined mummies from thousands of years ago, which contain high quantities of arsenic. Today, people there seem resistant to arsenic, suffering few ill-effects from drinking water full of rat poison. A genetic study of the indigenous population showed that they have the AS3MT gene, which controls a mechanism that lets them flush poisons out of their system faster than most other people, minimizing their exposure to the poison.

Whether the arsenic eaters had the same gene is tough to say. Even if they did, they pushed it past the limit many times. Scientists note that the population of Styria suffered a remarkable amount of arsenic-related deaths.

Arsenic as a Health Food

Businesses soon decided to share those arsenic-related deaths with the rest of the world. Arsenic was already in fashion in the 1800s. When pale skin was all the rage, an external application allowed women to constrict the capillaries in their face, making them pale. The Styrians gave cosmetics companies a chance to encourage women to take arsenic internally as well. Ad copy was effusive in its praises.

> "But the Styrian peasant-girl, stirred by an unconsciously growing attachment - confiding scarcely to herself her feelings, and taking counsel of her inherited wisdom only - really adds, by the use of hidri [arsenic], to the natural graces of her filling and rounding form, paints with brighter hues her blushing cheeks and tempting lips, and imparts a new and winning lustre to her sparkling eye."

Men took it as well. What else could they do, when scientists came back from Styria talking of the peasants' "strong sexual dispositions"? This had an effect on more than just the complexions or personal health of the people of the late 1800s. Poisoners use whatever is to hand, especially if they can get away with it. Anyone whose rich old uncle or inconvenient suitor dropped dead had two excuses. The poisoner owned arsenic in their possession because they took it for their health, and their victim had arsenic in their system because they, too, took it for their health.

Arsenic health tonics didn't last too long. People first heard of the arsenic eaters in the 1860s, and swallowing arsenic was out by the 1920s. The association with poison was too close. As more and more poisoners were caught, these tonics got the bad press they deserved. And it probably helped that as the world approached the Roaring Twenties, "Austrian peasant girl" wasn't the look anyone was going for anymore.

Top image: sfam_photo/Shutterstock.

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Hit by malaria, tribals turn to witchcraft for treatment in Sidhi - Hindustan Times

20140830 hindustantimes.com

hindustantimes **Hit by malaria, tribals turn to witchcraft for treatment in Sidhi**

Yogendra Pratap Singh, Hindustan Times Bhopal, August 30, 2014
First Published: 16:44 IST(30/8/2014) | Last Updated: 16:50 IST(30/8/2014)

In remote Sidhi district where superstition rules the roost, a number of tribals suffering from malaria these days are seeking cure through witchcraft. Given the situation, the witchcraft practitioners are having a hey day demanding cash and pooja articles from the patients and their relations.

The disease has claimed six lives in a week and the deceased include five children and a woman. They belong to three villages — Jhapari, Khajuria and Pathraula. As per a report reaching here, about 80 people of these three villages are suffering from malaria.

The situation is aggravated as the health department has failed to reach out to the tribals in remote areas and provide them proper treatment, allege the local residents.

A couple of days ago, the villagers took out a procession of local deities as per their rituals in a bid to pacify them and seek their blessings to cure them from the disease. They offered bangles and coconuts to the local deities.

"They are not getting a proper treatment. And even after such an alarming situation, the health department's team has not visited these villages. The health department's apathy is only adding to the superstitious belief of the tribals," said a local social worker Manoj Pandey talking to the HT.

He further said the villagers thought their deities were angry because of their misdeeds. Therefore, they were trying to pacify and please the deities.

"We have requested the health department officials and apprised them of the alarming situation. One day, a block medical officer (BMO) came to the villages and distributed some tablets among the affected villagers but this hardly worked," said another social worker Vipul Maravi.

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Rolf, Nazi dog and poet

From building UFOs to their occult beliefs, it's well-known that Nazi scientists were involved in some bizarre things during WWII, but the latest find is one of the weirder ones.

In the new book Amazing Dogs: A Cabinet of Canine Curiosities by Dr Jan Bondeson, a senior lecturer at Cardiff University School of Medicine, Bondeson details Nazi attempts to train canines to talk and read minds, hoping they could eventually take over as concentration camp guards.

"It is absolutely extraordinary stuff. There were some very strange experiments going on in wartime Germany regarding dog-human communication," Bondeson told **The Sun**.

Documents alleged that one dog, Rolf, learned to tap out letters of the alphabet with his paws, eventually learning poetry, and asking a visiting noblewoman to wag her tail. Another dog had learned to say "Mein Fuhrer" in German.

While Bondeson's bizarre finds are an intriguing piece of Nazi history, she admits that "there is no evidence (the research) ever came to fruition."

For more on the Nazi dogs of WWII, as well as a plethora of other weird stories about our canine companions, **check out Dr. Bondeson's latest book.**

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HMS Erebus, lost ship whose crew resorted to cannibalism, found in Canadian Arctic

By Justin Moyer
October 3

washingtonpost.com

In the middle of the 19th century, human skeletons began appearing on ice in the Canadian Arctic.

The first were found in 1859 in a lifeboat — two long-dead men sitting on the shore of King William Island, waiting for a rescue that never came. Ten years later, another was found on a different part of the shore. In 1879, six more were found. The ghastly yield continued well into the 20th century — bones in 1932, in 1987, in 1992. None were buried. Some had been marked by rodent teeth. And some, it appeared, had been sawed.

These, researchers say, are the remains of a crew that vanished in one of the worst disasters in the history of arctic exploration: the Franklin expedition, which disappeared in 1846, claiming the lives of 129 men.

Now, the wreck of the HMS Erebus, one of the ships in the expedition, has been found in icy waters near King William Island after more than 150 years.

“It is in astonishing condition,” research team member John Geiger, president of the Royal Canadian Geographical Society, told the BBC. “We’re over the moon.”

Led by Sir John Franklin, the expedition set out from England to seek the elusive Northwest Passage from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean through the Arctic. The Erebus — which shares a name with a part of Hades in Greek mythology — and another unfortunately-named ship, the HMS Terror, made it to Baffin Bay near Greenland. In 1846, they got stranded in ice near King William Island, about 1,200 miles northwest of Toronto.

They stayed there for two years, dying slowly. In 1848, the crew, reduced from 129 to 105, deserted the ship, according to a note later found in a mound of stones. Franklin, the note said, was already dead.

Once off the ship, the men likely died faster. Inuit reports from the 19th century said the men “fell down and died as they walked along.” They may have succumbed to scurvy. They may have succumbed to lead poisoning inflicted by canned food.

Or there may have been a more meaty problem.

As we know from other survival scenarios — the Donner expedition, the Andes plane crash dramatized in “Alive,” the siege of Leningrad — our species is not above, ahem, dining in when required.

According to one 1869 account, “one man’s body when found by the Innuits [sic] flesh all on and not mutilated except the hands sawed off at the wrists — the rest a great many had their flesh cut off as if some one or other had cut it off to eat.”

This isn't just Inuit legend reported secondhand when Ulysses S. Grant was president. In 1997, researchers evaluated cannibalism claims in "The Final Days of the Franklin Expedition: New Skeletal Evidence."

"Evidence for decapitation is suggestive, but not conclusive," the paper said. And: "The location of the cut marks is also consistent with defleshing."

The conclusion: "The presence of cut marks on approximately one-quarter of the remains supports 19th-century Inuit accounts of cannibalism on the expedition."

One unsolved mystery: Where's Franklin?

"There are all kinds of suggestions that he may have been buried on shore, perhaps buried at sea, or perhaps he is still on the ship somewhere," lead researcher Ryan Harris told CBC News. He was able to explore the crew's eating area on the Erebus, but has not gone farther inside the ship yet. "Hopefully archaeological investigations will be able to identify the answer to that question in the years to come," he said.

The Erebus research was funded by Parks Canada, a government agency likely motivated by more than a taste for solving seafaring mysteries or exposing Victorian-era cannibalism. The BBC pointed out Canada may wish to lay claim to the waters where the Erebus was found — waters the United States say are international. As the Arctic becomes more navigable because of climate change, more skeletons may emerge from the Arctic closet.

Harris didn't seem to care about such geopolitical machinations.

"Without a doubt it is the most extraordinary shipwreck I've ever had the privilege of diving on," he told CBC News.

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How a Strange 19th Century Coffin Lead to a Revolution in 20th Century Forensic Science

By strangeremains*on*October 28, 2014 • (1)

The "Fisk Airtight Coffin of Cast or Raised Metal" created by Almond D. Fisk. Note the glass face plates and the shroud-like lid on the coffin on the left. Image Credit: Funeral Facts

The "Fisk Airtight Coffin of Cast or Raised Metal" created by Almond D. Fisk. Note the glass face plates and the shroud-like lid on the coffin on the left. Image Credit: Funeral Facts

The Fisk Mummy

Almond D. Fisk was granted the first patent for a cast iron coffin, called the "Fisk Airtight Coffin of Cast or Raised Metal," in 1848. Known as the "Fisk Mummy," this metal coffin was a little eerie because it was shaped like a corpse wrapped in a burial shroud and had a glass window to view the face of the cadaver, which could be covered with a metal plate when the coffin was ready for burial. Fisk added accents like drapery, rosewood, and silk fringe to lessen its disturbing impact on prospective customers.

The design and materials were chosen because of their ability to protect the body and prevent decomposition so that it could endure transportation or delayed internment. According to Fisk's 1848 patent, "From a coffin of this description the air may be exhausted so completely as entirely to prevent the decay of the contained body on principles well understood; or, if preferred, the coffin may be filled with any gas or fluid having the property of preventing putrefaction."

After Fisk's foundry on Long Island in New York burned down in 1849, Fisk contracted an illness while helping fight the blaze and died on October of 1850. His company produced 3 models before 1854 but stopped at some point in the 1850's.

Other companies, like Crane, Breed, and Co. of Cincinnati and W.M. Raymond & Co. of New York and Chicago, were granted licenses to produce the cast iron coffins. These companies introduced modified versions that replaced the sarcophagus shape with a rectangular casket and simplified the design so it could be mass-produced. Eventually, these metal coffins became popular among wealthy families during the Civil War because of their ability to deter grave robbers and preserve the corpse during transportation.

The Case of Colonel William Shy

William Shy (picture) was a colonel in the 20th Tennessee infantry of the Confederate military. He was killed on December 16th 1864 when his unit was overrun during the battle of Compton Hill at Nashville. During the battle he was shot at point blank range with a .58 caliber minie ball to the head. Shy's family had his body embalmed and buried in a cast iron metal coffin in a small family cemetery on their property. Unfortunately he would not rest in

peace.

On December 24th 1977 Ben and Mary Griffith had recently purchased an antebellum estate called Two Rivers in Franklin, TN. On the grounds of the property was an old family graveyard where eight members of the Shy family were buried in the 1800's and 1900's. While Mrs. Griffith was showing the mansion and grounds to a friend on Christmas Eve she noticed that one of the plots has been disturbed. The grave's headstone bore the following inscription: "Lt. Col. Wm. Shy, 20th Tenn. Infantry, C.S.A., Born May 24, 1838, Killed at the Battle of Nashville, December 16, 1864."

The Griffiths immediately called the Sheriff's department. Since the sheriff didn't consider this an emergency, because he believed that would-be grave robbers dug up the plot to steal Civil War memorabilia, he waited until after the Christmas to investigate further.

When the Sheriff returned on December 29th and inspected the grave he discovered a headless, decomposing body dressed in a formal black jacket, a pleated white shirt, and white gloves. The investigators at the site agreed that this was the body of a recent homicide victim in an advanced state of decay. Their theory was that a murderer (or murderers) had attempted to hide the victim's body in plain sight by burying it in a used plot, but got scared off by Mrs. Griffith and her guest in the middle of disposing of the corpse.

Since the sheriff's department needed help identifying the body and estimating the time since death, they asked forensic anthropologist Dr. William M. Bass of the University of Tennessee at Knoxville to help with the recovery and analysis of the remains.

As Bass excavated what was left of the body he found a small hole in the top of the coffin, possibly caused by a pick or a shovel. When Bass looked inside the metal coffin he found nothing but sludge, which didn't surprise him. He had exhumed a 19th century cemetery in Tennessee and found little more than small bone fragments.

Bass examined the bones back at his laboratory. According to his osteological analysis the remains belonged to a white male, in his mid 20's to early 30's, and was about 5'10". Due to the presence of pink tissue and decomposing tissue Bass believed that this person had only been dead between six and twelve months.

Sherriff's investigators recovered 17 fragments of the cranium and mandible during additional inspection of the coffin (pictured here). When Bass glued them back together he found that the cause of death was a gunshot wound to the head with a large caliber gun at close range. The entrance wound was in the forehead right above the left eye, and the exit wound was near the base of the skull.

Dr. Bass began to suspect that he had made a huge error in the time since death when the teeth and clothes were examined. When he examined the teeth he discovered that many of them had cavities, but there were no signs of modern dental care, such as fillings. Then a technician from the crime lab who examined the clothes found that there were no synthetic fibers or labels, things that are typically seen in modern garments.

Bass realized his mistake. This body belonged to William Shy and it had been pulled out through the small hole in the lid while looters were trying to robbing the grave.

Dr. Bass reflected on how he could have miscalculated the time since death by more than a 100 years. Though embalming does preserve human remains, a body will not stay uncorrupted forever because embalming fluids only delay the inevitable process of decomposition.

Colonel Shy's corpse was protected from oxygen and insects inside his hermetically sealed coffin. The cast iron coffins of the 19th century were constructed to be air tight to prevent bacteria, a necessary part of putrefaction, from flourishing. The metal coffin also protected the body from insects, which can burrow through wood coffins and feast on human remains.

This case and its errors made international headlines and lead to an innovation in forensic anthropology.

The Body Farm

Sign from the Anthropology Research Center at the University of Tennessee at Knoxville. Image Credit: Lisa Bailey on Flickr

Fundamentally, Bass believed that this error was caused by a lack of understanding of what happens to the body during decomposition. So it was the Colonel Shy Case that motivated Dr. Bass to start the Anthropological Research Facility at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, better known as the Body Farm.

The Research Facility opened in 1980, behind the University of Tennessee Medical Center, to provide a setting for forensic anthropologists to document postmortem changes and to experiment with factors that affect time since death estimates. The Body Farm received its first donation in 1981, and over 1,000 bodies have been donated since. After the cadavers are studied at the Research Facility, the skeletons are stored as part of a skeleton collection and are used for years afterwards.

Today there are six "body farms" in the United States: University of Tennessee at Knoxville, Texas State University, Sam Houston State University, Southern Illinois University, Colorado Mesa University, and California University of Pennsylvania. Earlier this year Fox Valley Technical College in Wisconsin announced that they would open their own outdoor research facility.

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Hunters Find ATM in Middle of Woods

By Dan Stamm
Wednesday, Dec 10, 2014 • Updated at 4:56 PM EST

nbcmiami.com

A father and son on the hunt for game in eastern Pennsylvania instead found an automated teller machine in the middle of the woods.

Pennsylvania State Police responded to a wooded area off the unit block of Orchard Street in Rockland Township, Berks County around 9:30 a.m. Saturday after the men reported finding a stand-alone MAC machine.

Police said they don't know how much if any money was in the ATM. It also wasn't clear when the automated teller machine was dumped in the area.

On Tuesday, police released a photo of the black and blue-colored money machine in hopes that someone might know where it came from.

Anyone with information is asked to contact PSP Reading Barracks at 610-378-4011.

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On the hunt for the Beast of Cumbria: Sunday People man vows to catch the infamous feline fugitive

mirror.co.uk

- Jan 05, 2014 00:00
- By Giles Brown

Police have dealt with two dozen 999 calls in the past five years reporting a giant cat with a taste for sheep – many of which are found with their heads ripped off

Alex Alevroyiannis

Got the scent: Giles searches Kingmoor Woods on the outskirts of Carlisle

Nearly 50 panicky sightings of panthers, pumas, lions, leopards and even tigers at large around Britain were reported to cops last year.

In Cumbria alone, police have dealt with two dozen 999 calls in the past five years reporting a giant cat with a taste for sheep – many of which are found with their heads ripped off.

Sightings of the monster have been rising steadily in recent months, with the latest coming just three night ago.

So this week I set off to prove the existence of one of Britain's most infamous feline fugitives – the Beast of Cumbria.

Donning my best safari-suit and big game hunter's hat, I bravely set out to lay the fears of Cumbria's residents to rest once and for all.

I began my perilous quest on Friday morning armed only with my wits and a fishing net.

And I fearlessly hunted high and low, hiking across woodland, through under-growth, over fields and into a pub in a bid to lure the beast from its lair.

Adopting the role of a bounty-hunting detective, I launched my search for clues in the tiny village of Rockcliffe near Carlisle.

And while stalking the area, I found no shortage of folk who believe they've already seen my quarry.

The first person I spoke to was bus driver Steven Allison.

Proof?: A footprint cast

Steven, 34, claims he came face to face with it while driving past a field.

He recalled: "As I came around the corner this large black cat was sat staring at me. I got out of the car and was within 15 feet of the creature.

"I got a very good look at and it was definitely some kind of panther – it was black and shiny with a black tail.

Getty

"It was laid there on the grass. Then it took off at a rate of knots. It covered the length of the field in seconds."

Steven added: "When you first see it, it's bewildering – I've never seen anything like that outside of a zoo.

"I've had everybody saying I should be wearing glasses. But why would you open yourself up to ridicule unless you were sure of what you had seen?"

He dismissed claims by some people it was only a large dog.

Steven said: "People who say that are stupid – it was so shiny and feline. I'm a dog-owner myself and it walked and moved differently to a dog."

He said he's been bombarded by locals asking why he hadn't taken photos of the animal using the camera on his mobile.

But Steven added: "You're that startled the last thing you're thinking of is getting your phone out. It's scary to think something like that is living in the wild.

"I'd never have believed it existed until I saw it myself."

Next I met Sharon Larkin, who's spent the past two years tracking the beast.

The mum of four regularly visits the spots where it's been sighted.

And she is so committed to the task she has placed hi-tech motion-sensor cameras in the nearby woods in a bid to get clear footage of it hunting.

Getty

Clues: A photo of the 'cat'?

Sharon, 41, has even left bait – including cat food and Christmas turkey – among the trees in a bid to lure the creature towards her surveillance equipment.

Sharon, who runs a Facebook group called Big Cats In Cumbria, believes her - investigations have brought her face to face with the monster five times.

She has also collected casts and photos of its footprints.

Sharon said: "It is definitely a leopard or black panther. It's about the same size as a large alsatian or labrador dog.

"It is pure black but you can see the rosette patterns of its coat.

"The first thing I noticed was its yellow eyes – piercing yellow – and a long tail that it was swishing

around.

“Some people say it’s a myth but there are too many people who have seen it.

“When I speak to local people and farmers about 50 per cent of them have seen it or know someone who has seen it.”

Sharon went on: “It’s not ridiculous and people need to wake up to the fact these animals are in the UK.

“I’m doing my best to get footage to prove it is running around here.”

She added with a smile: “I might end up being the first person to be eaten by a big cat in the UK because I’ve got close to it so many times.

“But once you’ve seen it, it gets into your blood and you are drawn into it.”

I next headed for the centre of Carlisle because the beast has been seen near the city’s Cumberland Infirmary.

Marie Smith, 38, who lives nearby, told me: “Early one morning I saw a big black animal tearing up binbags behind one of the houses here. I was scared stiff.

“It was way too big to be a house-cat and it definitely wasn’t a dog.

“It had the ears and big swishing tail of a panther and it disappeared round the corner quick as a flash.”

I searched every nook and cranny – but again the beast eluded me. So after checking my map I headed north to the Kingstown Industrial Estate.

Gun shop owner Adrian Brown claims he’s seen the beast in the area three times and believes it may now have babies.

He said: “The first time I saw it was at about 3.30am – this big black thing went across the road.

“I jumped out of my jeep and ran to the fence on the verge but it had gone. There’s no way a labrador could have moved that quickly.”

Adrian, 50, added: “The second time was quite close to here in Stainton and I saw a mother with two cubs. I couldn’t believe it. It’s obviously breeding.”

After moving on to nearby Etterby I spoke to another shopkeeper, who asked not to be named for fear of ridicule.

Beast: Dangerous

She’s heard of local sightings in the past few days – and admits she’s worried.

She said: “The reports are definitely becoming more regular. I wouldn’t want to come face to face with it.”

I returned to Rockcliffe and spoke to chef Stephen Foster at the Crown and Thistle pub.

Stephen, 51, said: “I’ve seen stuff myself but always in the shadows. There’s definitely something big moving round here at night.”

But not everyone’s a believer. Labourer Lawrence Griffiths, 32, said: “I question some witnesses’ - credibility because it always seems to be dark when they see it.

Getty

"I'm out and about in the dark a lot walking my dog and running and I've never seen anything."

And if he's wrong?

"It doesn't bother me. If a big cat wants to eat me, there isn't much I can do about it."

Most of the calls to cops in Cumbria claim the cat is a panther or puma.

But a police log for one states: "Caller came across a very large sandy-coloured cat.

"Caller said it was a lion or lioness about the size of a labrador but had a huge tail with light stripes."

Whatever it is, I found no trace of the beast this time.

But the hunt will go on ... these are The X Giles, and the truth is out there – somewhere.

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In a Texas Court, a Fight for Lee Harvey Oswald's Coffin

nytimes.com

AUSTIN, Tex. — Hours after his younger brother Lee Harvey Oswald, the presidential assassin, was gunned down in the basement of the Dallas police station, Robert Oswald wrote a $710 cashier's check to a Fort Worth funeral home as he made arrangements for his brother's burial.

The purchase included a No. 31 Pine Bluff coffin and vault, a dark suit and flowers. More than five decades later, the simple pine coffin — now badly deteriorating — is at the heart of an unlikely epilogue to the drama that gripped the nation on Nov. 22, 1963.

Three days after he assassinated President Kennedy from a sixth-floor window of the Texas School Book Depository, and a day after he himself was shot and killed by the nightclub owner Jack Ruby, Mr. Oswald was laid to rest in a Fort Worth cemetery in a service so poorly attended that reporters were used as pallbearers.

His body was exhumed in 1981 to dispel conspiracy theories, including assertions that the occupant of the coffin may have been a Soviet impostor. Mr. Oswald, his identity confirmed by medical tests, was reburied in a new coffin, and the original was stored for years in Baumgardner Funeral Home in Fort Worth.

Now, a little more than a year since the nation observed the 50th anniversary of the Kennedy assassination, the latest chapter in the tale of Mr. Oswald's original coffin is playing out in a Fort Worth court.

After learning that Baumgardner Funeral Home sold the coffin through a Los Angeles auction house for $87,468, Lee Harvey Oswald's brother filed suit to block the sale, contending that marketing the crumbling coffin was "ghoulish" and had no historical value.

The funeral home is fighting back, defending its right to the coffin and contending that Robert Oswald, now 80, relinquished his legal claim by making it a "gift" to his dead brother.

State District Judge Don Cosby of Fort Worth heard testimony and arguments in a two-day trial that ended Tuesday. Lawyers say the judge is not expected to rule before Christmas.

Mr. Oswald, who lives in Wichita Falls, Tex., about 115 miles northwest of Fort Worth, did not appear at the trial because of declining health, lawyers said, but he aired his opposition to the sale in a 77-minute video deposition shown in court.

Mr. Oswald, who had gray hair and wore glasses, called the sale of the coffin "bad taste" in the video and described himself as its rightful owner. He has also said that he thought the coffin had been destroyed after the exhumation until he learned of the 2010 sale through the Nate D. Sanders Inc. auction house.

"He doesn't want money. He doesn't want the casket in a museum," said Mr. Oswald's lawyer, Gant Grimes of Wichita Falls. "He wants the thing destroyed. There's got to be a limit somewhere on what the public deserves as part of historical curiosity and just good taste."

In his video deposition, Mr. Oswald said he knew of "no case where anyone has ever bought a used coffin."

A differing perspective comes from Allen Baumgardner Sr., the funeral home owner. He acquired Miller Funeral Home, which performed the original burial, changing its name, and he assisted in the 1981 exhumation.

When the coffin was exhumed, it was too badly damaged to be reused, and Mr. Baumgardner, who also testified during the trial, kept it in a storage room in the funeral home for 30 years before putting it up for auction four years ago, according to news media accounts and court documents.

He said that his funeral home became the rightful owner of the coffin because no one else claimed it, and that he believes the coffin should not be destroyed because it is "part of history."

A central tenet of Mr. Baumgardner's argument is that when Mr. Oswald purchased the coffin it became a gift to his dead brother's estate, said Brett Myers, the Dallas-based lawyer for Mr. Baumgardner, and Mr. Oswald's widow, Marina Oswald Porter, and their two daughters have not made a claim on the coffin.

"Allen without question believes he owns the casket," Mr. Myers said.

Mr. Baumgardner approached a "couple of museums," his lawyer said, but was unable to secure a commitment that the coffin would be preserved.

Mr. Oswald's lawsuit also asserts that the funeral home also used the Los Angeles auction house to sell items related to the Oswald family besides the coffin, including an embalming table and the assassin's original death certification, which was invalidated because of an error.

The funeral home said it acted properly in claiming possession of the items because they

were funeral home equipment or records and paperwork related to the funeral home's activities.

Mr. Baumgardner then turned to the Los Angeles auction house. The coffin, measuring 80 inches long and 24 inches deep, was sold to an unnamed bidder. But the sale was canceled after Mr. Oswald filed his suit in 2010. The coffin sits in storage "at a site in Los Angeles," said Laura Yntema, the auction manager at Nate D. Sanders Auctions.

"It's in limbo until the case is resolved," she said. "So whatever the court tells us to do, we'll do regarding the casket. It's being kept in a secure facility, so it's safe."

The sales notice for the coffin stated that it was falling apart, citing extensive water damage, aging and other signs of disrepair.

"It was a simple pine casket, and you can imagine from years of being in the ground, it's not in very good shape," Ms. Yntema said.

But all of those involved say the dispute reaches well beyond decaying pieces of wood and into a part of American history that seems frozen in time. Even a line from Mr. Oswald's petition rises above legalese to offer a jarring reminder of the past.

"Plaintiff is the brother of Lee Harvey Oswald, deceased. On Nov. 22, 1963, in Dallas, Texas, Lee Harvey Oswald assassinated President John F. Kennedy."

In Fort Worth, Mike Cochran, a former Associated Press reporter, stayed abreast of developments in the trial and found himself mentally traveling back to Nov. 25, 1963, when he and other journalists were asked to volunteer as pallbearers at Rose Hill Cemetery.

Family members were seated on five aluminum chairs and a small group of onlookers watched from behind a fence, according to an online account of the 20-minute proceeding.

"I said not only no, but hell no," Mr. Cochran said, recalling his first reaction to being asked to volunteer. But he changed his mind when a competitor from United Press International accepted the request. "I was young, I was inexperienced and I wasn't too smart. But I wasn't stupid. So on the spot, I changed my mind."

Lawyers in the case say they, too, feel the historical overtones. "It seems like it happened so long ago," said Mr. Myers, the lawyer representing the funeral home. "But when you get a chance to talk to these people who have firsthand recollections of these events, it makes it seem like it wasn't that long ago at all."

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In Center of Town, Giant Penis Erected to Appease Soul Stealing "Widow Ghost" - Who Forted? Magazine

By Greg Newkirk on March 25, 2013

whofortedblog.com

magicpenismain

The people of Thailand certainly have a rather unique way of dealing with malevolent ghosts. Namely, they build huge penis statues.

Residents of Nong Yai in Rayong have been dealing with **a troublesome "Widow Ghost"** sucking the life out of the village men for some time now. In fact, the angry phantom has reportedly killed so many men over it's 20 year rampage that it's earned the town the nickname of "The Widow Village", ensuring that visiting men know what they're walking into.

So exactly what makes the Widow Ghost any different than your run of the mill spook? The spirit targets young men, sucking their life force and draining them of their energy, tiring them, until they're but an empty shell. On the night the men finally die, the Widow appears to them in the form of a beautiful woman, fulfills their sexual desires, and in doing so, steals their souls.

Women, right?

Anyway, the Widow's haunting has resulted in a pile of dead men and plenty of villagers fleeing for their lives. The village women eventually got tired of the old hag stealing their boyfriends, so they decided to do something about her: they *erected* a gigantic dong in the center of town. Now, each year the women perform a ceremony that involves sprinkling the wang's two foot shaft with holy water.

Nattacha Butchali, a 47 year old villager, insisted to *The Phuket Gazette* that the story was true and not just a case of "naive villagers" believing strange tales. Thank god for the magic wiener. Without it, Nong Yai would be screwed and I wouldn't be able to see how many ways I can say "dick" in one news update.

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Indoctrinating Innocents: Creepy Christian Sex Slavery Cult Cracked - Who Forted? Magazine

By Dana Matthews on January 31, 2013

whofortedblog.com

This guy is the reincarnated Jesus who ran a sex-cult. Clearly.

Mexican authorities put an end to the Nuevo-Laredo sex slavery cult "Defensores de Cristo" this week, and the creepy instructional video they used to teach fellow members how to indoctrinate others has just been highlighted.

The Mexican cult group, whose leader believes himself to be the reincarnation of Christ, was reportedly recruiting women with the intention of forcing them into labor and prostitution. Police are reporting that most of the women indoctrinated into the "The Defenders of Christ " were instructed to have sex with leader Ignacio Gonzalez de Arriba. The confusing motto for the cult scrawled in large font in the center of their website.

I WILL FOCUS MY COMPASS 24 hours a day to a maximum of feeling! Using my symbols! And for the record, officially bind this button to sign!

Fourteen men have been arrested after police raided a house this week, finding many cult members and their children living in horrible conditions.

Support Network for Cult Victims reported that cult leader, Ignacio Gonzalez de Arriba has been busy operating in many parts of South America for close to three years. As well as ties to the Nuevo-Laredo cult, Arriba reportedly teaches courses in supposed "bi-programming" a metaphysical method of coping with anxiety.

Unlike the United States, Mexican religious groups must register with the government. The "Defenders of Christ" has done no such thing even after being active for three years. It has taken until now for legal action to finally be taken against the cult.

The creepy video informing their indoctrination methods can be seen below.

Dana Matthews

3 Comments

1. Religion: Getting skeevy, manipulative men laid since the dawn of time.

2. If I had a sex cult, I think I'd recruit cougars and ladies with tatoos. And wear a shirt. jesus

    - I think the allure of building your own whacky sex cult is being able to make up your own rules. Heck, this gang might recruit some "girl next door" types, another group might want tattoos and cougars, and then you've got the fundamental mormons who like their 12 year olds.

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Investigator Uncovers Photos of Legendary "Faceless Ghost" That Haunts Abandoned Tunnel

Roadtrippers Become a fan Travel local.

huffingtonpost.com

Posted: 11/25/2014 9:06 pm EST Updated: 11/28/2014 1:59 am EST

America is full of some pretty incredible urban legends. From Gravity Hills where invisible hands push your vehicle up a slope, to Frog Men stalking the Loveland Castle, to the White Lady haunting Union Cemetery, you can throw a stone and there's a good chance it'll land in the territory of some kind of monster or mystery. Many times, though, the truth is far more interesting than the legend, and such is the case with "The Green Man".

DevonChristopherAdamsviaFlickr

For many years, the tale of the Green Man has been one used by parents to keep their children scared enough to stay inside at night, and by locals to keep teenagers too spooked to enter the abandoned train tunnel just outside of town. The legend says that the Green Man, once an employee of a local power company, was horribly disfigured in a terrible accident that melted his face and turned his skin a deep green hue. For years, locals would report sightings of the glowing ghost of the Green Man walking down the rural roads at night, only to disappear into the dark recesses of the tunnel.

WhoForted?

A good summary of the legend, via WhoForted:

On the outskirts of Pittsburgh, near where Piney Fork empties into Peters Creek, there's an old neglected railroad tunnel covered in graffiti and filled with road salt. It was built in 1924 as the Piney Fork Tunnel to service coal mines along the Pennsylvania Railroad's Peters Creek Branch. Abandoned since 1962, the locals have given it another nickname. To many people in the Pittsburgh area, this is Green Man Tunnel. Teenagers used to drive into the tunnel, turn off their lights, and call out to the "Green Man" who would appear from the darkness, his skin tinged green from a tragic electrical accident. If he touched your car, his electrical charge would either stall the vehicle or make it

difficult to start.

While the fear-fueled story of the Green Man is certainly the best kind of urban legend, filled with gruesome deaths, supernatural powers, and a terrifying curse tailor-made to frighten teenagers, occult historian and paranormal investigator Ken Summers recently uncovered the true story of the Green Man, complete with some rare photographs of the "faceless ghost", and it's a lot more sad than scary.

WhoForted?

WhoForted?

In truth, the Green Man's real name was Raymond Robinson, though to those who traveled Pennsylvania's Route 315 in the middle of the night, he was known as Charlie No Face. You see, in 1918, when Raymond was just a boy, he was climbing on a train track bridge when he accidentally snagged against a power line. The subsequent shock sent 22,000 volts of electricity screaming through his body, quite literally melting his face off. When the smoke had settled, he had lost both of his eyes, his nose, an ear, and even an arm.

As he grew up, Raymond quickly became aware of people's cruel nature, earning

desktop-1416352980

nicknames like "The Zombie" and being subject to the screaming of terrified children. Over the years, Raymond was able to find solace in long walks down State Route 351, though he only took his hikes at night so as to minimize the amount of people he might frighten. Being blind, after all, meant that the night meant nothing to him.

Flickr

As you might imagine, Raymond's late-night walks began to cause quite a stir, as teenagers headed to parties began to see a "faceless ghost" wandering the darkened highway. Before long, the legend of "Charlie No Face" began to circulate to nearby towns, and by the 60's, the legend was causing full-on traffic jams along the stretch of road as cars full of people went searching for the "ghost".

WhoForted?

Those who were fortunate enough to stumble across Raymond would realize that he was, in fact, flesh and blood, and often left feeling a bit sorry for him after stopping for a chat. Raymond took the ghost hunts in stride though, even capitalizing on his popularity by offering to pose for photographs... for a price.

Ken Summers reports:

> After being discovered by accident on his nightly walks, the tale of the Green Man —or Charlie No Face, as he was also called—developed. There are conflicting stories about where the "green skin" idea came from. Some accounts say he always wore his favorite green plaid shirt or other green clothes that reflected the color onto his pale skin while others say his skin was a pale shade of green. Either way, it became a popular pastime to head out to Route 351 and look for Ray. Those who weren't too terrified to stop would chat with Ray over a smoke. He even posed for pictures, often in exchange for beer or cigarettes.

Ray continued his evening walks until his death in 1985, but by then, his story had become legend. Soon after his death, the details of his disfigurement were told less and less as a boy who suffered an accident, and more often as a vengeful spirit out for teenage blood. By the late 90's, the name Raymond Robinson was all but forgotten, the legend of the Green Man finally winning out.

Today, the legend of the ghost with no face has spread as far as Ohio, but the Green Man Tunnel remains the most-visited piece of the Pennsylvania legend. To this day car loads of

kids still pull up to the old train bridge and call out for Charlie No Face, some even claiming to have seen him in the darkness. If you're lucky, maybe you'll even see him yourself.

WhoForted?

WhoForted?

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Is there life deep down below?

22.12.2014 english.pravda.ru

Is there life deep down below?. 54203.jpeg

Communities of microbes, sustainable ecosystems deep below the Earth's crust? Not probably, but certainly and not only at one site, according to an article printed in the magazine Nature on December 17 (*). Will the new research also help scientists discover life beneath the crust of Mars?

Almost two years after scientists discovered water trapped underground for a billion years, perhaps more, deep inside a mine in Ontario 2.4 kilometers below the Earth's crust - and more importantly, brimming with gases such as life-supporting hydrogen, a team of researchers led by Barbara Sherwood Lollar of Canada's University of Toronto has begun studying data collected from boreholes, looking for signs of life.

The study includes over 200 boreholes made in 32 mines, mainly in Scandinavia, Canada and South Africa, where in 2006, microbes living in rocks 4 kilometers below the Earth's crust under Witwatersrand and feeding off hydrogen were discovered. The conclusion by Dr. Sherwood Lollar, who discovered the billion-year-old water under Ontario, is that levels registered in the boreholes suggest higher than expected levels of hydrogen gas, and levels greater than those discovered under Witwatersrand.

This means that rather than hydrogen filtering downwards from the planet's surface, rocks themselves produce gas, by separating oxygen and hydrogen from water through natural radioactive activity processes within the rock itself. Dr. Sherwood Lollar considers that the discovery of high levels of hydrogen is significant, since over 70% of the rock forming the continents is pre-Cambrian (formed 581 million years ago to 485 million years ago), stating that "This massively changes the concept of where life can be on this planet".

Since microbial life lives off hydrogen and since there is far more hydrogen deep below the Earth's crust than originally thought, and given that microbial life has already been discovered at a depth of 4 kilometers, it appears that there are many lifeforms existing and to be explored.

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Japan's Paantu Festival: Supernatural Beings Spread Sacred Mud and Good Luck

ibtimes.co.uk

Paantu are supernatural beings. Paipateroma (Wikipedia Commons)

The annual Paantu festival in Miyako-jima, Okinawa, Japan, sees local men dress up as supernatural beings to cleanse the island and its inhabitants.

During the ninth month of every year, according to the Chinese calendar, male residents of the small island Miyako-jima dress up as Paantu, an indigenous god, and chase children around the streets, trying to paint them with sacred mud.

The men are covered from top to bottom with leaves and mud from a sacred local well. On their faces they wear a curved wooden mask with a large forehead, small eyes and a thin mouth.

Paantu stalking children issei zee (YouTube)

The centuries-old event has been passed down as a ritual to get rid of evil spirits and bad luck.

Tradition dictates that the mud should be spread onto newly built houses, or on the faces of newborn babies as a blessing.

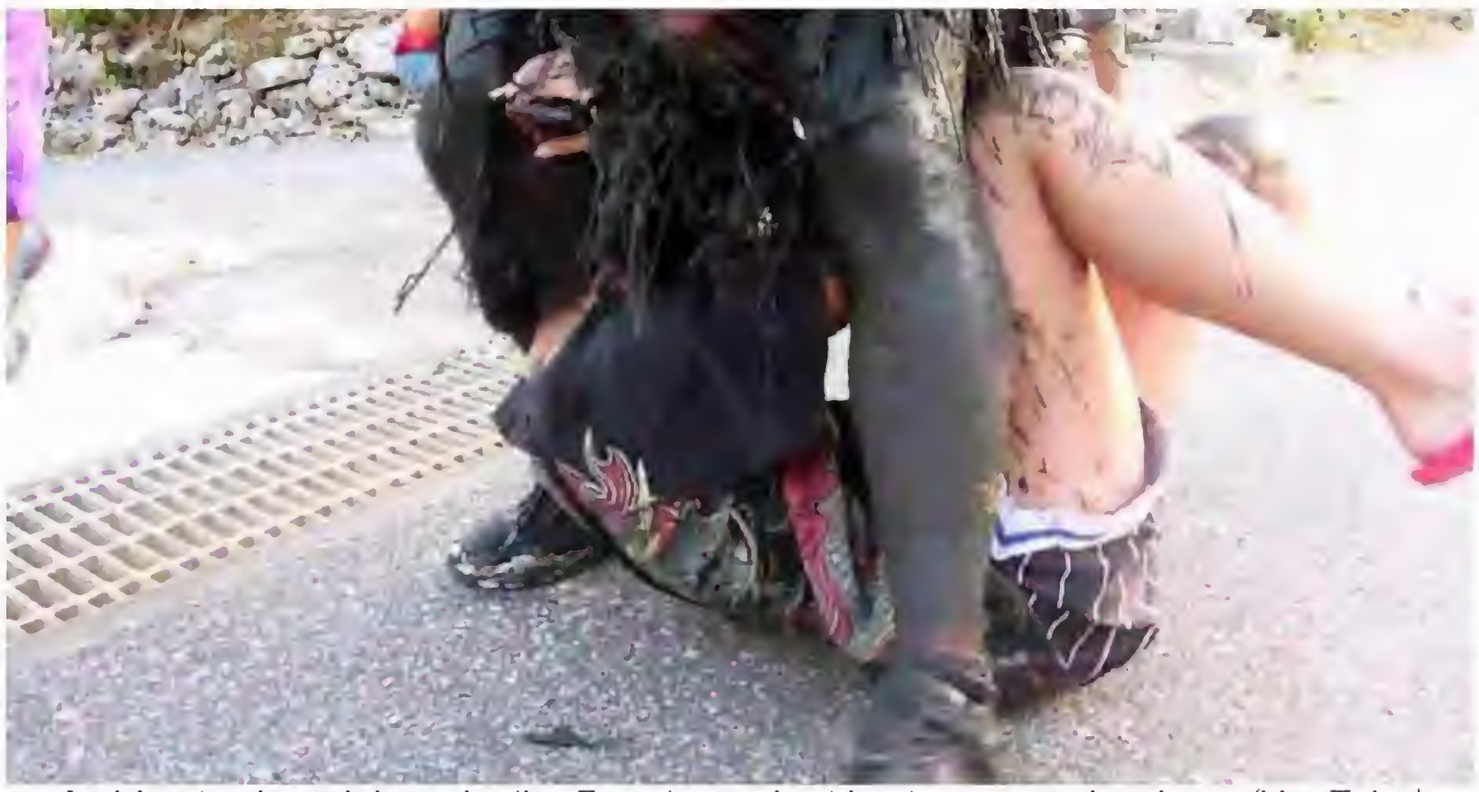
It is believed that if you are touched by a Paantu, you will have good fortune in the coming year.

Small children and those trying to avoid getting muddy are typically targeted by the Paantu, because, as with every good festival, you have to have a little fun, too.

Unfortunately, children are often left scared and crying but parents, keen on having their fun as well, will happily hand their terrified child over to the creatures.

No one is left safe from mud as the Paantu roam the island, and houses and cars will be left covered in sacred dirt.

This year's Paantu festival is due to take place on 3 and 4 October.



Not even police and cars are safe from the Paantu.

A girl gets pinned down by the Paantu as she tries to escape. issei zee (YouTube)

One child is left terrified issei zee (YouTube)

2013 International Business Times

Japanese Bathroom Ghosts–Yes, You Read That Right. Bathroom Ghosts.

japanpowered.com

July 20, 2012 Andrew Kincaid

Japanese Bathroom Ghosts--Yes You Read That Right. Bathroom Ghosts

Japan is a weird, weird place. Anyone who is casually acquainted with Japanese pop culture knows that. But things get even stranger when you delve into the world of their folklore and urban legends. Japanese legend features a stable of ghosts, goblins, monsters, and various other bugaboos that puts the Pokemon roster to shame. Among the strangest that I've come across are Japan's bathroom ghosts. So far as I can see there are six of them, and they are as follows:

Akaname

We'll start the list with one of the strangest ghosts I've ever come across, not to mention among the grossest. As Japanese ghosts go, the Akaname isn't very threatening. It can be found in dirty bathrooms, licking up the filth that accumulates between cleanings. It's said to be monstrous in appearance, with red skin and a pointed tongue, but other than giving you a good scare should you stumble across one, the Akaname is harmless.

Noppera-Bo

With the Noppera-Bo we move from the Akaname's strangeness to outright creepiness. The Noppera-Bo looks like a person, with one notable exception–its face is completely smooth, with the exception in some cases of of a mouth and teeth. This ghost appears at random in restrooms, often ladies restrooms, with the sole goal of scaring the crap out of any occupants unfortunate enough to be doing business at that moment. Other than giving you a good scare though, the Noppera-Bo is as harmless as the Akaname is, if not as disgusting and a whole lot creepier.

Hanako

The legend of Hanako reads almost like a Japanese version of Bloody Mary, minus all the eye clawing. Japanese school children sometimes dare one another to knock on an empty stall door and say "Are you there, Hanako-son?" to which the ghost is said to reply affirmatively. Whenever she is sighted, she's said to wear an old-fashioned bob haircut and a red skirt. The story goes that she was killed during a bomb raid in WWII, although how that led her to spooking around random elementary school bathrooms is beyond me. Like the previous two entries, Hanako does little more than scare random bathroom goers. The next few entries are not quite so benign. Let's ramp up the horror with…

Aka-Manto

Imagine sitting in the stall, doing your business, when a disembodied voice asks you if you want a red mantle. Confused, thinking maybe there is a guy in the stall next to you playing a prank, you answer yes just to see what happens. Suddenly your back erupts in pain as an invisible force peels the skin from your back. You've just had an encounter with the Aka-Manto, the red mantle, a spirit described as a tall, handsome man dressed in a red cloak and wearing a red mask. This spirit is said to be irresistible to the ladies. As to why he hangs out in bathrooms and rips people's skin off, I have not the slightest. Everyone needs a hobby I suppose, even lady-killing malevolent spirits.

Reiko Kashima

This ghost is more recent than the others on the list, and in many ways her story is more tragic. It goes that she was brutally attacked and raped (presumably in a bathroom) by a large group of men who left her for dead. She tried to crawl away, only to fall unconcious across a set of rail tracks. When the next train came by, it sheared her legs off. Now she wanders Japan's public bathrooms in search of her lost legs. When she comes across people, she will ask them a series of questions. If you answer wrong, she twists your legs off. Oh and apparently just knowing about her is enough to solicit a visit from Reiko Kashima. So, it might be a good idea to avoid public bathrooms in Japan after reading this article. You know, just in case.

Akai-Kami-Aoi-Kami

This one reminds me of The Matrix, when Morpheus asks Neo to chose between the red pill and the blue pill. Except with the Akai-Kami-Aoi-Kami (literally red paper, blue paper) there are no good choices. If you answer red paper, you'll find yourself flayed alive, while if you answer blue paper you'll be strangled to death (thus turning the skin blue from lack of air…no one says ghosts aren't creative). But let's say you're a smart ass and you answer any other color. The legends vary a bit on the outcome, but many say that if you answer anything but red or blue you'll be dragged off to hell. Some say if you answer yellow, you'll wind up having urine dumped over your head. Unsavory as it is, I think I'd take the latter.

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Jimmy - the war donkey?

22December2014

bbc.com

Jimmy the Donkey was bought by the RSPCA in 1920

Jimmy the Donkey was bought by the RSPCA in 1920

The tale goes that Jimmy the donkey was born in a World War One trench and was made a sergeant for his work with a Scottish regiment. But there is much mystery attached to the story.

In 1920, at the Peterborough Cattle Market, Jimmy was sold to the RSPCA by a horse dealer called George Walding.

Over the next 20 years Jimmy was used in and around Peterborough to raise funds for the charity.

But, Jimmy had something of a colourful back story.

World War One at Home

It was claimed that this little black donkey had been at the Somme and had become the mascot of the 1st Battalion of the Cameronian Scottish Rifles.

"Jimmy was born in No-Man's Land, and the Cameronians brought him back to the British lines, gave him tinned milk and looked after him," says Sam Morrell, member of the Cameronian Scottish Rifle Association.

"Jimmy carried food, ammunition and injured men - everything connected with regimental supplies."

"They gave him three stripes and made Jimmy a sergeant and he used to lift his hoof and salute an officer. He was quite well known for this," Sam adds.

Regimental mascot

In 1920, an ex-soldier named Private Dudley lent weight to the story of Jimmy's war exploits by saying he recognised the donkey as his old regimental mascot, but that at the time the donkey had actually been known as Neddy.

Neil Mitchell, a local historian, based in Peterborough, says: "Private Dudley was with the medical corps and attached to the Scottish Rifles.

"Private Dudley expanded on the story of the donkey being the regimental mascot. He also told the newspapers of the day that the donkey's name was Neddy and not Jimmy as the dealer had stated."

And even with the change of name, Private Dudley's testimony might have put the donkey's war record beyond doubt.

But in the 1970s, horse dealer George Walding's son made a spectacular admission: Jimmy's story had been a hoax.

Neil Mitchell says: "The story was that the George Walding had been to a horse-sale in Southampton.

"Unfortunately there were a lot of London dealers there and the prices of horses shot up. Not wanting to have a wasted trip, he bought a donkey from a group of gypsies camped close by to the sale.

"After sending the donkey by rail to Peterborough he tried to sell it to Sanger's Circus.

"They didn't want him, so George Walding took him to the Peterborough Cattle Market and tried to sell him with an elaborate story attached about the donkey being born on the Western Front. Hearing this story, a local RSPCA inspector agreed to buy Jimmy for £20."

But Sam Morrell is unconvinced.

He says: "I find that unbelievable. That was the Somme donkey at Peterborough and I've seen the documentation there. That and the fact that were services at Peterborough after the war with Cameronians involved, and the fact that Jimmy was a nationwide hero, says it all."

After many years fund-raising for the RSPCA, Jimmy died in 1943 and was buried in Peterborough's Central Park.

Whether he did serve at the front is something that may never be known for sure but, regardless, Neil Mitchell says Jimmy should be remembered for his fundraising if nothing else.

He says: "He deserves to be buried in the park, as a reminder for what he did for the animals that suffer - and why the RSPCA was formed in the first place."

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Jingle Bells Christmas song started as a drinking song written by a 'jerk'

2014/12/17 cbc.ca

The truth about Jingle Bells - drag racing, drunk driving, a deadbeat dad and conspiracy theories

By Daybreak South, CBC News Posted: Dec 16, 2014 7:16 PM PT Last Updated: Dec 17, 2014 7:41 AM PT

James Pierpont, the man credited with composing Jingle Bells in Medford, Mass. (Wikipedia)

Here's the truth about Jingle Bells. It's not a Christmas song — it's a Thanksgiving song. It's not a jolly family song — it's a drinking song. It's at the centre of a nasty dispute, and it was written by a 'jerk'.

The real story of Jingle Bells starts on the banks of the Mystic River in New England, just upstream from Boston, in Medford, Mass.

If you walk along High Street, and stop at Rosetti Optical, you'll find a plaque, which reads *Jingle Bells composed here.*

On this site stood the Simpson Tavern, where in 1850, James Pierpont wrote the song Jingle Bells.

A plaque marks the spot in Medford, Mass. where Jingle Bells was composed by James Pierpont. (Medford Historical Society)

Kyna Hamill, professor of literature at Boston University and vice-president of the Medford Historical Society, spoke to *Daybreak South's* Chris Walker about the origins of Jingle Bells.

As you might expect, the story begins with a one-horse open sleigh.

"Medford is home to a

series of sleigh races that used to occur on a street called Salem Street, and because of this event, which pretty much happened in the middle of the 19th century, these sleigh races — which you could pretty much call drag races — down this street was one of the most popular events," said Hamill.

"Because of that, the influence and inspiration of the song, we believe came from those races."

Who was the author of Jingle Bells, James Lord Pierpont?

"He's kind of a jerk, actually. He would leave all of the time. He went out west to try to make his way with the gold rush. He went all over the place and left his wife with his father," said Hamill.

Then when his wife died, he quickly remarried and abandoned his kids.

"He didn't come, apparently, to his first wife's funeral. He's sort of not a nice guy."

Hamill said there's more to the song itself. It was never a Christmas song.

"If you think about the fact that one of the great industries of Medford was rum-making, and if you really think about the lyrics of the song, with the lens that these are drag races that are happening at top speed down the centre of this street, one of the suggestions is that it's actually a drinking song," she said.

"Some of the words are actually associated with the idea that this is a song you sing while you're drunk, talking about an event that happened while they were drunk."

Sleigh races held in Medford, Mass. in the mid-19th century - described as high speed drag racing - inspired the popular song, Jingle Bells. (Medford Historical Society)

'People who love the history of Christmas will probably not like this answer'

Take a look at the lyrics in the second verse of *Jingle Bells*:

A day or two ago
I thought I'd take a ride
And soon, Miss Fanny Bright
Was seated by my side,
The horse was lean and lank
Misfortune seemed his lot
He got into a drifted bank

And then we got upsot.

"If you want to go psychological about this, he's a guy who was under the shadow of this very rigid father, who was totally against drinking, and was in the temperance movement, and was part of the abolitionist movement and took himself very seriously," said Hamill.

"It's kind of a song about a young guy breaking away from his father's shadow.

"People who love the history of Christmas will probably not like this answer, but I think that there's something about the relationship between the father and the son which kind of shows how he doesn't want to be like his father in this song. He wants to have fun."

So how did a drinking song by a deadbeat dad under the thumb of his strict father ever get to be the Christmas song of record?

"There's people that have really strong conspiracy theories about this song. I really don't know why people get so impassioned about this song," Hamill said.

Those conspiracy theories originate in Savannah, Ga., where residents believe the people of Medford are stealing their song.

A plaque in Savannah, Ga. marks the city's claim to the popularity of the song. (Daniel X. O'Neil)

The theory stems from the fact that when Pierpont's first wife died, he moved to Savannah, married the mayor's daughter, and became pastor at the church.

During a Thanksgiving service, he led the congregation in a rousing rendition of Jingle Bells. They loved it, and he performed it again a month later at Christmas.

Thus, Jingle Bells became a Christmas song — Savannah's Christmas song.

One more thing about Jingle Bells.

Some 115 years after it was written in a pub in Medford, Jingle Bells became the first song ever broadcast to earth from space, during a Gemini mission in 1965.

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03 Jun2012

by Zack Davisson

Jimenju

Translated from Mizuki Shigeru's Mujyara

This tree is found in mountain valleys. The fruit of the tree looks like a human head. It doesn't say a word, but it is constantly laughing. It is said that if the fruit laughs too heartily, it falls from the tree.

According to the Edo period Hyakka Jiten encyclopedia Wakan Sansai Zue (和漢三才図会; A Collection of Pictures of Heaven, Earth, and Man from China and Japan), the Jinmenju trees are found in the south, and the fruit of the tree is called the jinmenshi, or human-faced child. They ripen in the fall, and if you eat the fruit they have a sweet/sour taste. It is said that the Jinmenju seed also has a human face, eyes, ears, nose, and mouth. It is possible that the trees were all eaten and it is why we don't see them today.

In the past however, it was said that people planted great orchards of the laughing Jinmenju. That must have been a beautiful sight.

The legend of the Jinmenju comes from China, and was passed onto Japan where it was considered to be a yokai due to its peculiar nature. There are also stories of trees bearing human-faced fruit from India and Persia, usually with the faces of beautiful girls. Even now, when you walk through the forest you can see trees whose roots bear a resemblance to human and yokai faces. I have five pictures of trees like this in my photo albums. I wonder if this is some new species of Jinmenju?

Translator's Note

Most people think of yokai as some kind of monster, but the Jinmenju is a type of yokai called choshizen, or super-nature, which includes mysterious plants and animals. Toriyama Sekien included the Jinmenju in his collection Konjyaku Hyakki Shui (今昔百鬼拾遺; Supplement to The Hundred Demons from the Present and the Past). All Jinmenju stories have their origin in a Chinese book Sansai Zue(三才図会; A Collection of Pictures of Heaven, Earth, and Man).

This entry was translated for Dan Tsukasa, who is developing a Japanese folklore video game called Kodama. (Which you all should all check out!) I am helping Dan out with some yokai info for the game, part of which takes place in a magic forest. So look forward to some more choshizen offerings.

11 Comments *(+add yours?)*

SekienNinmenju

1. 83n831
Jun 04, 2012 @ 06:01:47

From the European front, I find that when the companions of Vasco de Gama encountered a strange nut-bearing tree in their travels to India ca. 1498, they had a similar reaction. According to João de Barros, the fruit "wants to resemble a nose placed between two round eyes, from where it throws the sprout, when it wants to be born; by reason of such figure, it was called by our [men] coco, name imposed by the women on anything they want to put fear to the children, this name thus remained, as no one knows another." (quote courtesy of Wikipedia).

So the coconut retains the name of a common Iberian boogieman (or yokai in Japanese) variously called El Cuco or El Coco. The word evidently comes from a slang term for (human) head or skull as in the phrase "loco in the [en el] coco," title of a popular 1950s song by Eileen Barton (and currently a meme-phrase among followers of the new "My Little Pony" cartoon series).

2. Zack Davisson
Jun 04, 2012 @ 14:10:20

I have heard of the coconut / face connection before, which is very similar to the jinmenju. I hadn't heard abou the El Coco connection though. Very cool.

And there is a new "My Little Pony?" Yikes! That is scarier than any monster on my site!

3. vilajunkie **Jun 05, 2012** @ 12:25:23

There's the waqwaq (or wakwak or vakvak) tree in medieval Arabic legends too:

"Waqwaq" was also the name of an unusual tree. The earliest reference to it (though without the name) occurs in a Chinese source, the T'ung-tien of Ta Huan, written before 801. Ta Huan was told the story by his father, who had lived in Baghdad for 11 years as a prisoner of war after the Battle of Talas. He claimed to have heard the following story from Arab sailors:

The king of the Arabs had dispatched men who boarded a ship, taking with them their clothes and food, and went to sea. They sailed for eight years without coming to the far shore of the ocean. In the middle of the sea, they saw a square rock; on this rock was a tree with red branches and green leaves. On the tree had grown a number of little children; they were six or seven thumbs in length. When they saw the men, they did not speak, but they could all laugh and move. Their hands, feet and heads were fixed to the branches of the trees.

The same story occurs repeatedly in Arabic sources, where the tree is identified as "the waqwaq tree," and is later embellished by turning the little children into beautiful young women, suspended from the branches by their hair. The classic account, written in

12th- century al-Andalus, says the women "are more beautiful than words can describe, but are without life or soul.... This is a wonder of the land of China. The island is at the end of the inhabited world...."
[...]
Al-Biruni, who wrote his wonderful book Kitab al-Hind (The Book of India) in AD 1000 based largely on Sanskrit sources, mentions a country where people are born from trees and hang suspended from the branches by their navels. Perhaps the waqwaq tree too goes back to a Sanskrit source, and the Arab tales of Waqwaq are themselves a faint memory of a time when the Indonesian archipelago was in the cultural orbit of Hindu–Buddhist culture.

The story of the waqwaq tree traveled westward, like many other oriental stories, appearing in at least one of the surviving manuscripts of the 14th-century traveler Friar Odoric and in one of the many medieval French romances of Alexander the Great. Its final appearance dates from 1685, when all the mysteries of the Indian Ocean had long faded in the light of pragmatic European accounts. It occurs in the Safinat Sulayman (The Ship of Solomon), an account of a Persian embassy to Siam (now Thailand) written by a scribe who accompanied the mission. He says he heard it from a Dutch captain:

Once on our way to China we dropped anchor in the bay of an island to avoid a heavy storm. There was a strange collection of people inhabiting the island who only barely resembled human beings. Their feet were three cubits long and just as wide and they were completely nude and had very long hair. At night they all climbed to the top of their own trees in the jungle, even the women, who bore their children with them under their arms. Once up in the tree they would tie their hair to a branch and hang there all night resting.

Nothing shows the medley of cultures of the Indian Ocean so well as the story of the waqwaq tree: It probably originated in a Sanskrit Hindu text, was told in the eighth century to a Chinese envoy by an Arab sailor, was brought to Europe by a Franciscan friar and was retold by a Dutch sea captain to a Persian envoy to the king of Siam.

http://www.saudiaramcoworld.com/issue/200504/the.seas.of.sindbad.htm

4. angrygaijin
Jun 09, 2012 @ 05:37:46

Cooool!

I showed this to my gf. She told me to look up the 人面魚.

5. Anonymous
Jun 11, 2012 @ 05:34:20

In my country, there's a similar ghost too. Its name is Gundul Pringis, "gundul" in Javanese means bald while "pringis" means grin or grimace. Like Jimenju, Gundul Pringis looks like a bald head with red eyes and it's grinning. The appearance of this

ghost starts with a sound like a fruit falling to the ground and rolling around.

6. Zack Davisson
Jun 18, 2012 @ 12:08:31

There are a few human-faced monsters. The Jinmen-gyo (human-faced fish), Jinmen-ken (human-faced dog), and–oddest of all–the Jinmenso, which is a bump on the knee with a human face.

- Anonymous
Feb 12, 2013 @ 01:55:36

  Apparently there's also a human faced dog once in my country too. -_- Weird things happen a lot in my country.

7. vilajunkie
Jun 20, 2012 @ 10:50:22

Back when I was in Japan (1998), I saw a TV show about the paranormal which had an episode with Kuchisake-Onna, Hanako no Toirei, and the Jinmen-ken. The Jinmen-ken probably freaked me out the most–though Kuchisake-Onna was a close second. I can't remember the show's name. But if anyone can find that particular episode for me, you win a thousand internets. :)

8. Zack Davisson
Jun 20, 2012 @ 11:10:14

Those three are more properly Urban Legends than folklore, although they have been welcomed into the yokai pantheon. I don't know that exact show … I have seen a few similar ones. Every summer the Japanese airwaves are full of ghost and paranormal one-shot TV shows.

9. vilajunkie
Jun 20, 2012 @ 20:59:11

Yeah, I guess they are more properly urban legends than folkloric legends. However, I remember seeing an emaki illustration in the Kuchisake-Onna segment that was claimed to be an Edo period version of her. Of course, it just as easily could have been a modern illustration meant to look like it came from an emaki. She was chasing after two people (kids?) and leaning over them with a huge grinning head, similar to the Mikoshi-Nyuudou.

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John Gielgud wrote gay porn film, producer says

Ben Beaumont-Thomas
Wednesday 26 November 2014

theguardian.com

He is known as one of the greatest-ever interpreters of Shakespeare, was awarded an Oscar and made a knight, but John Gielgud could gain fresh fame for something rather more counter-cultural: a gay porn film he wrote for Peter de Rome and which may finally go into production.

De Rome, who died earlier this year, made gay pornography in New York from the 1960s onwards, at a time when homosexuality was illegal, and became the subject of the recent documentary Peter de Rome: Grandfather of Gay Porn. The documentary's producer David McGillivray revealed details of a collaboration between De Rome and Gielgud at a recent Barbican retrospective of pulp director Pete Walker.

"Peter de Rome knew everybody when he was working, including John Gielgud, and John was so impressed with Peter's work – which of course was porn – that he wrote Peter a screenplay," McGillivray said. "Nobody knows anything about this script, it's not in the John Gielgud letters, it's not mentioned in the biographies, it's an unknown script. John Gielgud's only screenplay. So next year, we are going to make that.

"It's called Trouser Bar. John Gielgud was obsessed with trousers, loved corduroy and leather. And so he wrote a film set in a menswear shop."

Kristen Bjorn, the Peter de Rome of the 21st century according to McGillivray, is to direct it. Bjorn's film credits stretch back to 1989 and include Manly Beach, Bone Island, and two instalments of Rocks & Hard Places. McGillivray added: "The Guardian and the Indy are just going to go weak at the knees."

But the film may meet some opposition along the way. "The John Gielgud estate is furious," he continued. "They won't let us do it, but they don't have a leg to stand on. So they're going to be very upset about this, but we've got the BFI [British Film Institute] behind us."

In a statement, the BFI said that while it had given support to De Rome's work since the director donated his Super-8 films to the BFI national archive in 2006, it had "no involvement with the unmade film, Trouser Bar". The BFI is set to screen Peter de Rome: Grandfather of Gay Porn next month, featuring a Q&A with McGillivray.

Gielgud, who never formally came out as gay, suffered a nervous breakdown after he was caught cruising in a Chelsea public toilet in 1953 – an incident that did not damage his career as he initially feared, but which he never spoke about publicly. The events were turned into a play in 2008, Plague Over England, by Nicholas de Jongh.

As well as the Trouser Bar screenplay, Gielgud once offered to provide a voiceover to Kensington Gorey, a De Rome film which remains unfinished. But he demanded to remain uncredited – perhaps pointlessly, given his famously distinct and resonant tones.

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Joint snake

A **joint snake** is a mythical creature of the Southern United States, the myth likely having spread elsewhere.

Supposedly, the snake can break itself (or be cut) into pieces and will reassemble itself. It is said that if a piece of the snake is taken and the pocket knife used to cut the snake is set down in the place of the snake's piece, the knife will join up with the whole of the snake. The myth is probably based on legless lizards that can regenerate their tails after they are broken off.[1] Such lizards are often called joint, or, more commonly, glass snakes. May also be a reference to the Hydra in Greek Mythology.

American folklore and tall tales

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PLOS ONE

Neuroimaging during Trance State: A Contribution to the Study of Dissociation

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Abstract

Despite increasing interest in pathological and non-pathological dissociation, few researchers have focused on the spiritual experiences involving dissociative states such as mediumship, in which an individual (the medium) claims to be in communication with, or under the control of, the mind of a deceased person. Our preliminary study investigated psychography – in which allegedly "the spirit writes through the medium's hand" – for potential associations with specific alterations in cerebral activity. We examined ten healthy psychographers – five less expert mediums and five with substantial experience, ranging from 15 to 47 years of automatic writing and 2 to 18 psychographies per month – using single photon emission computed tomography to scan activity as subjects were writing, in both dissociative trance and non-trance states. The complexity of the original written content they produced was analyzed for each individual and for the sample as a whole. The experienced psychographers showed lower levels of activity in the left culmen, left hippocampus, left inferior occipital gyrus, left anterior cingulate, right superior temporal gyrus and right precentral gyrus during psychography compared to their normal (non-trance) writing. The average complexity scores for psychographed content were higher than those for control writing, for both the whole sample and for experienced mediums. The fact that subjects produced complex content in a trance dissociative state suggests they were not merely relaxed, and relaxation seems an unlikely explanation for the underactivation of brain areas specifically related to the cognitive processing being carried out. This finding deserves further investigation both in terms of replication and explanatory hypotheses.

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Introduction

Dissociation is typically defined as the lack of normal integration of thoughts, feelings, and experiences into consciousness and memory [1]. The idea that traumatic experiences cause dissociative symptoms is a recurrent theme in clinical and neuroimaging literature, and some of the cognitive phenomena associated with dissociation appear to be dependent on the emotional or attentional context [2,3]. Although non-pathological dissociation is quite common in the general population, dissociative experiences are mostly studied as a risk factor for dissociative pathology [4,5]. Spirituality and religiousness have been shown to be highly prevalent in patients with schizophrenia and dissociative symptoms [6]. However, the varying methodological issues and discrepancies among the studies developed so far make it difficult to articulate a comprehensive framework for brain activity and cognitive mechanisms in pathological and non-pathological dissociation.

Although the nature of the mind and its relationship with the brain is still one of the most challenging issues for science [7–10], assumptions made in this respect are the cornerstones guiding therapeutic interventions [11–13]. This study addresses important theories underpinning creativity and include religious and spiritual experiences. The American Psychiatric Association [14] pointed to the need for more research in this field by recognizing the non-diagnostic (non-pathological) category of "Spiritual and Religious Problems" in the DSM-IV, thus healthy forms of dissociation [15,16] may be distinguished from pathological ones [2,5].

Mediumship, a spiritual phenomenon that has often been reported throughout human history, is defined as an experience in which an individual (the medium) claims to be in communication with, or under the control of, the mind of a deceased person or other nonmaterial being [17]. Mediumistic experiences are usually dissociative, such as motor, sensory or cognitive automatisms (e.g. hearing spirits or reporting body movements or thoughts caused by spirits), and alternate identity or possession). Therefore it is no surprise that the study of mediumistic experiences was crucial to the development of ideas concerning unconscious and dissociative processes. Pierre Janet's classic 1889 study of dissociation examined several mediums; Carl Jung's doctoral thesis was a case study, and William James did meticulous research on the medium Leonore Piper [18,19]. There has been a trend to divide

dissociation in two broad categories: detachment (a sense of separation from the self or the world) and compartmentalization (inability to deliberately control actions or cognitive processes that would normally be amenable to such control) [20]. Although it sometimes involves detachment too, mediumship usually relates to the compartmentalization subtype.

Psychography is one of the many possible dissociative forms of mediumistic expression [17]. "Writing mediums" or psychographers claim that they write under the influence of spirits, and some pyschographed writings have had a major impact in different communities around the world. Brazil's most significant and prolific psychographic medium, Chico Xavier, whose education ended with elementary school, produced over 400 books of automatic writing spanning a wide range of styles and subjects, selling several million copies, with all copyright earnings donated to charity [21,22].

A study of the mental health of 115 spirit mediums [17,23] found that subjects had high socio-educational levels, showed low prevalence of psychiatric disorders, and were well adjusted socially compared with the general population. Their experience of mediumship was distinct from dissociative identity disorder. Nevertheless, few studies have investigated the neural substrates underlying dissociative states of consciousness related to religious experiences [24–26]. In one previous neuroimaging study of glossolalia – a trance-like state with vocalizations that sound like language but lack clear linguistic structure – subjects were found to have reduced activity in the left caudate nucleus and the right prefrontal cortex, along with increased activity in the superior parietal lobes [25]. Neurofunctional research on sensitive experiences such as religious ones requires specific methods that do not adversely affect volunteers' performance [27].

Like the glossolalia study, the present study utilized single photon emission computed tomography (SPECT) to measure regional cerebral blood flow (rCBF), which is closely correlated with brain activity. We used the SPECT neuroimaging method for this study because it enables researchers to maintain a suitable environment free of distracting/ansiogenic effects for subjects performing complex tasks requiring silence and concentration. To our knowledge, there have been no previous studies of the association between claimed mediumistic dissociative states and specific CBF alterations.

Based on our prior research on related practices such as meditation and prayer, we focused primarily on the prefrontal cortex and anterior cingulate gyrus since both are known to be involved in the brain's attentional network [24,25]. Furthermore, these areas are involved, along with Broca's area, in the production of speech. We also found evidence of changes in thalamic activity in limbic structures such as the hippocampus, and the superior temporal region is involved in a number of processes including language reception. The precentral gyrus may be involved in the motor function related to writing. Therefore, our hypothesis-driven analysis focused on these regions.

We studied the neurophysiological nature of dissociative mediumship in psychography as measured by changes in rCBF. During psychography, individuals write legible structured narratives but often claim to be unaware of the content or grammar of the written text. The present study aims to determine whether this type of dissociative trance state is associated with specific alterations in brain activity that differ from those found when writing normally, i.e. not in a dissociative trance state. Since psychographed contents feature complexity and planning, our *a priori* hypothesis was that the areas involved in cognitive processes while writing consciously, such as reasoning and planning content, would show similar activation during mediumistic trance.

Methods

We examined 10 Brazilian psychographers who had been doing automatic writing for 15 to 47 years, producing 2 to 18 psychographies per month (Table 1), whom we divided into 5 'less expert mediums' and 5 with 'substantial experience. All were white, right-handed, in good mental health (Table 2), and not currently using psychiatric drugs. The criteria used to describe mediums as 'experienced' was at having practiced mediumship for least 20 years and produced at least 10 psychographies per month at the time of beginning of the study.

The 10 mediums were well adjusted in terms of their family, social and professional lives, and regularly helped people who had lost loved ones (Table 1). None of them were paid for their mediumistic activity, which they see as part of their mission of helping people. All of them reported spiritual experiences in childhood or adolescence. Both groups had the same mean age: experienced (48+−9.8 years) and less expert (48.6+−6.7). 'Experienced' mediums had practiced mediumship for 37.4+−8.8 years with an average of 15.6+−2.2 experiences of psychography per month, against the 'less expert' records of 22.4+−14.8 years and 4.8+−3.0 times respectively.

The number of participants required to determine the statistical power of the study was based on previous glossolalia-related research [25]. Several mental health inventories and qualitative assessments of subjective experience were administered. Depressive symptoms were assessed using the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI) [28], anxiety symptoms using the Beck Anxiety Inventory (BAI) [29], past and current mental disorders using Schedules for Clinical Assessment in Neuropsychiatry (SCAN) [30]. Borderline personality disorder and history of childhood abuse were based on data from the Dissociative Disorders Interview Schedule (DDIS) [31], and psychiatric morbidities were screened using the Self-Report Psychiatric Screening Questionnaire (SRQ) [32] (Table 2).

The local Human Research Ethics Committee in Brazil and the Institutional Review Board at the University of Pennsylvania authorized the study, and all participants signed informed-consent forms.

Neuroimaging Procedures

We measured rCBF using SPECT during psychography (writing while in a dissociative trance state) and compared the data with those collected during normally conscious or non-trance writing (the control task). Both writing tasks were carried out in a quiet and dimly lit environment. Volunteers were asked to do psychography in the same manner as in their regular activity as mediums. All followed the same procedure: they sat on the chair where they would perform their tasks, said a prayer, closed their eyes, and concentrated. Usually, they were in a state of trance within a few minutes, and took up a pencil and started to write. Mediums reported entering a state of trance very easily and quietly. For the non-trance writing, in the same place, they were asked to write normally on their thoughts and on a similar subject to the one they usually wrote on during psychography.

After the psychography task, all subjects were asked if they had achieved the mediumistic state (contact with a deceased person), and were also asked to rate their level of mediumistic experience from 1 'poorly achieved' to 4 'successfully achieved'. The order of tasks was randomized among subjects to avoid the sequence effect and the monitored interval between tasks ensured distinction between trance and non-trance states for psychography and control writing respectively. The use of SPECT imaging for the purposes of this study allowed for the evaluation of the trance state itself. SPECT studies of rCBF are performed in such a manner

Table 1. Sociodemographics.

Subject	Age	Marital status	Work status (not related to mediumship)	Educational level	Gender	Years of mediumship/ psychographies per month
Exp 1	50	Married	Full time	University	Male	40/16
Exp 2	59	Single	Retired	University	Male	42/18
Exp 3	45	Single	Full time	University	Female	34/16
Exp 4	53	Married	Full time	University	Male	47/16
Exp 5	33	Married	Part time	University	Female	24/12
Lex 6	58	Divorced	Full time	University	Female	22/4
Lex 7	50	Single	Retired	University	Female	45/2
Lex 8	50	Married	Full time	High school	Male	25/8
Lex 9	40	Married	Housewife	High school	Female	15/2
Lex 10	45	Divorced	Full time	University	Female	5/8

Note: Experienced subjects (**Exp**) and Less expert subjects (**Lex**). **University**: bachelor degree.
doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0049360.t001

that the scans reflect what is occurring at the time of injection of the radioactive tracer, which was during the control writing or psychography tasks rather than afterwards. This technique is also used clinically to evaluate seizures in patients during the seizure itself, when injection is performed [33]. Subjects are scanned afterwards, but tracer distribution is not reversible once injected and taken up in to the brain. This enables imaging of the trance state itself.

Subjects began writing in the room and wrote for 10 minutes, at which time they were injected through the IV canulas (inserted in their left arms) with 7 mCi of ^{99m}Tc-ECD. After writing for another 15 minutes, a researcher signaled to stop writing and they were taken to the SPECT scanner for a 40-minute scan.

Images were acquired on a triple-headed scanner (Trionix Research Laboratory) using high-resolution fan-beam collimators. Projection images were obtained at three-degree angle intervals on a 128×128 matrix (pixel size 3.56 mm×3.56 mm) over 360°. SPECT images were reconstructed using filtered back projection, followed by a low-pass filter and 1st order Chang attenuation correction.

After the first writing-task scan, subjects returned to the room to perform the second task (psychography or control). After being observed performing the second task for 10 minutes, they were injected in the same way with 25 mCi of ^{99m}Tc-ECD, without disturbing them. Subjects then continued to perform the second task for 15 minutes, and the session was then ended. Each subject was scanned (second writing-task scan) for 40 minutes using the same imaging parameters as above. Mediums' phenomenological experience during psychography and control task were assessed using a semi-structured interview just after the image scan acquisitions.

Image Analysis and Statistics

The raw rCBF data were converted to ANALYZE format and preprocessed using SPM5 (Wellcome Trust Center for Neuroimaging, London) implemented in Matlab 7.10. The rCBF images from both writing tasks were then realigned with each other to correct for small shifts between scans using a six-parameter rigid body transformation with 4th degree B-spline interpolation. Images were then spatially normalized to the T1 weighted template provided by the Montreal Neurological Institute (MNI)

Table 2. Mental Health data.

Subjects	SRQ	BDI	BAI	SAS-SR	Current mental disorder-SCAN	Borderline Personality disorder–DSM IV	Childhood abuse
Exp 1	4	6	6	1.67	0	0	0
Exp 2	0	0	1	1.58	0	0	0
Exp 3	1	0	0	1.65	0	0	0
Exp 4	2	7	7	1.82	0	0	0
Exp 5	1	5	2	1.69	0	0	0
Lex 6	2	3	4	1.57	0	0	0
Lex 7	2	3	2	1.39	0	0	0
Lex 8	5	6	14	1.91	0	0	0
Lex 9	0	0	0	1.37	0	0	0
Lex 10	4	1	1	1.41	0	Yes	Yes

Legend: Scores of experienced subjects (**Exp**), less expert subjects (**Lex**), on the Self-Report Psychiatric Screening Questionnaire (**SRQ**) (cutoff point for common mental disorders: >4 for men and >6 for women), Beck Depression Inventory (**BDI**) (cutoff for depression: ≥10), Beck Anxiety Inventory (**BAI**) (mild anxiety: ≥10–18, moderate: 19–29) and Social Adjustment Scale (**SAS-SR**) (range: 1 [best] to 5 [worst]).
doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0049360.t002

by means of a least-squares approach and 12-parameter spatial transformation followed by estimating nonlinear deformations as implemented in SPM5 and smoothed using a full width 8 mm Gaussian filter at half maximum.

Preprocessed rCBF images from each subject were entered into a first-level analysis comparing the two groups (experienced versus less expert) and two conditions (psychography versus control). The images from each subject were then entered into an exploratory second-level group analysis in which a 2×2 Repeated Measures ANOVA (SPM5) was performed to determine the main group effects (experienced versus less expert) and condition (psychography versus control). Global intensity differences were corrected by using proportional scaling. The resulting SPM{F} map testing interaction effect was thresholded at $p<0.05$ ($Z>1.64$) and a cluster extent of 100 contiguous voxels. Identified clusters were then divided into anatomical regions using the Talairach Daemon database [34]. Finally a linear correlation model was applied to compare changes in complexity of written content to changes in CBF in the regions with significant differences between psychography and control state.

Analysis of complexity of written content

After writing for 25 minutes without a break, written content was assessed by a Brazilian Language and Literature PhD with extensive experience of scoring compositions submitted for university entrance examinations using Analytic Assessment [35,36], which weighs several characteristics or components of effective writing to provide an in-depth rating of writing quality and skills. The writing evaluated involved approximately 350 words relating to the period in which the brain was impregnated with tracer. This analysis was masked (blinded) so that the analyst did not know which group each volunteer belonged to. The following criteria were used to analyze written content: (i) punctuation, (ii) selection of lexical items and spelling, (iii) verb and noun concordance, and pronoun collocation, (iv) development of subject matter, (v) sentence structure and articulation between parts, and (vi) consistency. Scores ranged from 1 to 4 for each criterion as follows: (1) poor, (2) fair, (3) good, and (4) very good (Table 3). Content scores for the two groups were compared using the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test.

Table 3. Text Complexity.

	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	Total
CT Exp 1	3	2	3	2	2	2	14
P Exp 1	3	3	3	3	3	3	18
CT Exp 2	3	3	3	2	2	2	15
P Exp 2	3	4	4	3	3	3	16
CT Exp 3	2	2	2	2	2	2	12
P Exp 3	2	3	3	3	3	3	17
CT Exp 4	3	4	3	3	4	3	21
P Exp 4	4	4	4	4	3	4	22
CT Exp 5	3	3	2	2	3	2	15
P Exp 5	3	4	3	3	3	3	19
CT Lex 6	2	3	2	2	3	3	16
P Lex 6	3	3	2	2	3	3	21
CT Lex 7	2	3	2	2	2	3	14
P Lex 7	3	2	3	2	2	2	15
CT Lex 8	2	3	2	2	2	2	15
P Lex 8	3	3	2	2	2	3	15
CT Lex 9	2	2	2	2	2	2	12
P Lex 9	2	3	2	2	2	3	14
CT Lex 10	2	2	1	1	1	2	10
P Lex 10	1	2	2	2	2	2	11

Legend: The level of complexity of both types of written content (psychographed: **P** and control task: **CT**) was analyzed for each volunteer separately (Experienced: **Exp** and Less expert: **Lex**). Average complexity scores for psychographed content were higher than those for control-task writing, for both the whole sample [16.8 (SD 3.33) vs 14.4 (SD 2.95) - $p=0.007$] and for experienced mediums [18.4 (SD 2.30) vs 15.4 (SD 3.36) - $p=0.041$]. For less expert mediums, the difference was near significance [15.2 (SD 3.63) vs 13.4 (SD 2.41) - $p=0.066$]. Planning for psychography writing was, on average, more sophisticated than for the control task, and the higher level of complexity relating to the more extensive planning work during psychography would require more activity from areas involved in cognitive processing.
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Results

Although the subjects studied had reported apparent delusions, auditory hallucinations, personality changes and other dissociative behaviors they did not present mental disorders and were able to use their mediumistic experiences to help others. Structured clinical interviews excluded current psychiatric illness. None of the subjects, except one with previous signs of borderline personality disorders, showed any clear sign of current Axis I or II mental disorders [14] (Table 2). All subjects stated that they felt very comfortable during the study and had successfully reached their usual trance state during the psychography task (4 'successfully achieved'), and this assessment was made shortly after the psychography task. All reported being in their regular/vigil state of consciousness during the control task. Seven found writing for the control task easy, and the three that mentioned some difficulty reported that they usually found it difficult to compose written texts in their everyday lives. During psychography, all mediums reported altered states of consciousness, but to different degrees. Experienced mediums spoke of a deeper trance, with clouded consciousness, often reporting being out of the body, and having little or no awareness of the content of what they were writing. Less expert mediums were in a less pronounced trance state and usually reported writing phrases being dictated to them in their minds.

Groups were randomized so there was no significant difference in mean time between scans. Using a t-test analysis of the regions based upon the counts per voxel, there were no significant differences when the entire group was analyzed. However, experienced subjects during the control condition showed significantly higher activity in these regions ($p<0.001$ for all regions) than less expert mediums. Significantly higher rCBF ($p<0.01$ for all regions) was shown in several areas of the brains of less expert psychographers, particularly in the left culmen, left hippocampus, left inferior occipital gyrus, left anterior cingulate, right superior temporal gyrus and right precentral gyrus (Figure 1, Table 4) during psychography compared to normal (non-trance) writing. The precentral gyrus focus actually spans the precentral gyrus and the medial frontal gyrus, but we reported the region based upon the MNI coordinates (Table 4). The experienced mediums writing in a trance state showed consistently lower rCBF in these regions than when writing in the control condition (Figure 1) – the difference was significant compared to the less expert ones ($p<0.05$). The written content produced by subjects during both types of task – with or without mediumistic trance – had never been written before. The level of complexity of both types of written content (psychographed and control-task) was individually

analyzed for each subject. Content produced during mediumistic and control writing usually involved ethical principles, the importance of spirituality, and bringing together science and spirituality. The average complexity scores for psychographed content were higher than those for control writing (Table 3), for both the whole sample [16.8 (SD 3.33) vs 14.4 (SD 2.95) - $p = 0.007$] and for experienced mediums [18.4 (SD 2.30)3.36) - $p = 0.041$]. For less expert mediums the difference was near significance [15.2 (SD 3.63) vs 13.4 (SD 2.41) – $p = 0.066$].

Finally, we performed linear correlation analyses comparing change in the overall complexity score for written content to change in CBF in the six regions identified as significantly associated with the psychography state. Overall, there was a trend towards an inverse correlation between change in complexity and change in CBF in each region. Correlation coefficients ranged from 0.59 to 0.74 for p values from 0.03 to 0.12. All correlations were inverse so that greater increases in complexity were associated with progressively decreased CBF in each region.

Discussion

Our hypothesis was not confirmed for the less expert psychographers, as the results showed significant rCBF changes in several brain areas (Figure 1, Table 4) during psychography compared to non-trance writing. Moreover, contrary to our hypothesis, the experienced mediums doing dissociative writing in a trance state showed consistently lower rCBF in these regions than when writing in the control condition (Figure 1).

In relation to hypnotic suggestion, some studies showed prefrontal activation [37], but not others [38], whereas our

Table 4. MNI coordinates for cluster centers of regions analyzed in Figure 1.

Region	Cluster Center X Y Z
Superior Temporal Gyrus	58, −60, 18
Precentral gyrus	34, 12, 30
Culmen	−50, −42, −30
Inferior Occipital Gyrus	−40, −82, −2
Hippocampus	−34, −20, −20
Anterior Cingulate Cortex	−14, 38, 16

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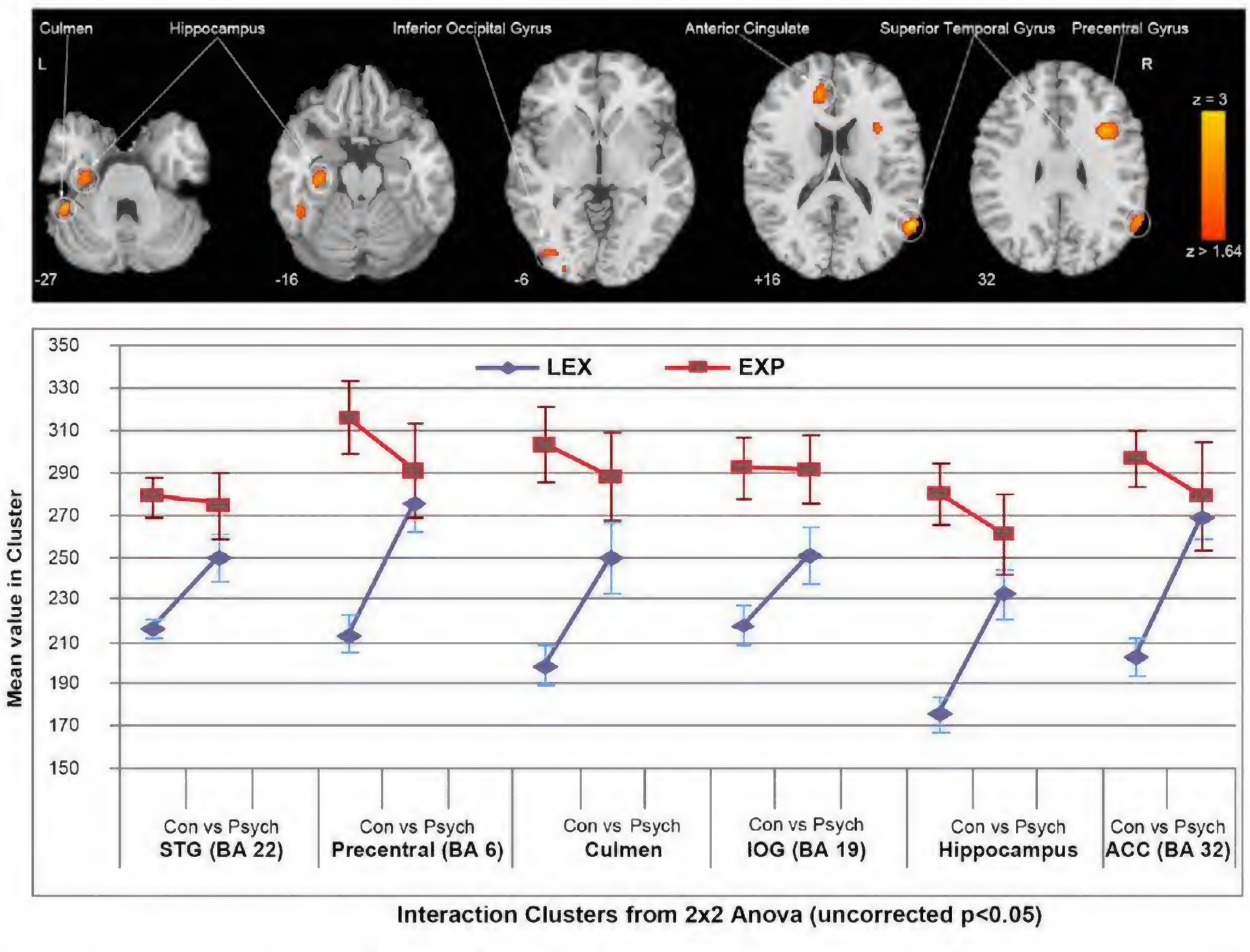

Figure 1. Results from 2×2 Repeated Measures Anova (SPM5) showing mean cluster size (sd) of the main effect of group (EXP: experienced - red vs LEX: less expert - blue) and condition (psychography vs control). The resulting SPM{F} map testing interaction effect was thresholded at $p<0.05$ ($Z>1.64$) and a cluster extent of 100 contiguous voxels.
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subjects showed lower levels of activity in the frontal attention system. Although reduced frontal-parietal connectivity [39], and frontal deactivations are observed following a hypnotic induction in highly suggestible individuals [40], hypnosis is phenomenologically distinct from mediumistic expressions, therefore the two conditions are not directly comparable [41]. Moreover, the idea that hypnosis reflects a dissociative states remains controversial [42].

Brain scan studies of meditation have generally found increased frontal lobe activity and related attentional network [24,43,44], unlike our findings for the experienced mediums. Although meditative states do not necessarily involve dissociation and the phenomenological expressions are quite different from psychography, a recent study suggested that meditation improve the efficiency of brain functioning so that experts' brain activation levels are lower than those of less expert meditators [45], a pattern similar to that reported in the present study.

Previous neuroimaging research has shown that writing is a complex process requiring synchronized cognitive, language, and perceptual-motor skills [46]. Complexity of written content reflects the author's creativity and planning work underlying activity in the precentral gyrus, right superior temporal gyrus, left anterior cingulate, hippocampus, culmen, and occipital lobes. Damage or hypoperfusion in these regions has been correlated with severely impaired writing [46–48]. In particular, the experienced mediums showed higher complexity scores, suggesting that planning for psychographed content was more sophisticated than for content written while not in a dissociative mediumistic trance. The higher complexity of the text involving more creativity and planning work during psychography would presumably require more activity in the right precentral gyrus, right superior temporal gyrus, left anterior cingulate, left hippocampus, left culmen, and left inferior occipital gyrus [46–48] than would the less complex control task, but this was not the case, especially for the experienced mediums (Figure 1).

Findings concerning lower levels of left-hemisphere activity and higher right-hemisphere activity have been reported in pathological expressions of dissociative and psychotic experiences [49,50]. Unlike our volunteers, schizophrenia patients had lower blood-flow levels in left-hemisphere regions, while higher-flow areas may reflect a need to draw on the right hemisphere to compensate for deficits in left-hemisphere networks [51]. Moreover, CBF abnormalities in anterior cingulate, precentral, temporal and culmen might be predictive for development of psychosis in high-risk subjects with subsequent transition to psychosis [50,52,53]. The anterior cingulate is involved in the attentional system in conjunction with emotional regulation, learning, memory, error detection, conflict monitoring, strategy planning, and empathy [54,55]. Decreased anterior cingulate, precentral gyrus, superior temporal gyrus and hippocampus activity in experienced mediums may partly explain the absence of focus, self-awareness and consciousness during the dissociative state observed in pyschography. Despite several similarities with schizophrenic patients related brain activation [50,52,53], subjects participating in the present study did not have schizophrenia or any other mental disease (Table 2). This finding underlines the importance of further research into differential diagnosis between pathological and non-pathological dissociation [5,16,17].

We attempted to maintain as much similarity as possible between groups so that we could better compare their brain functions. The observed differences in CBF may be related to their different levels of expertise, but could also reflect differences in anxiety, effort or efficiency. For example, studies have shown that anxiety is associated with increased uptake in the ventral right prefrontal cortex and left insula/putamen area [56]. Thus, some of the changes we observed may have reflected anxiety, although none of the subjects reported particularly high levels of anxiety or stress.

Studies of cognitive expertise have revealed two general patterns of changes in cerebral activity. A number of studies have found that experts and non-experts show increased activity in different regions. The level of activity in the fusiform face area (FFA) when experts identify objects such as cars or birds, predicts performance on a behavioral measure of expertise made outside the scanner [57,58]. However, studies have found that some brain regions show increases while others show decreases during task performance by experts [59]. Observations of calculations by experts have reported increased activity in the medial frontal gyrus, parahippocampal gyrus, anterior cingulate gyrus and right-middle-occipito-temporal junction, as well as the left paracentral lobule [60]. Other studies of arithmetical expertise have shown larger regions of increased activity [61]. These results suggest that experts utilize different or more extensive brain pathways. However, other studies suggest that more skilled subjects make more efficient use of brain regions and activity. In these circumstances, less brain activity is observed on cognitive tasks. On the other hand, those who struggle to perform cognitive tasks often have to recruit more brain areas as a compensatory mechanism [62]. The present study's results suggest that level of expertise may have an important effect on brain function. There was a trend towards an inverse correlation between change in complexity and CBF alteration in each region. Since these correlations were inverse, the implication is that greater increases in complexity were associated with progressively decreased CBF in each region. This interesting finding taking into account the complexity of the texts psychographed deserves future investigations and elucidative hypotheses. One might speculate that these findings were related to those for improvisational music performances, in which decreased activity in some attentional areas have been involved in a training-induced shift toward inhibition of stimulus-driven attention, enabling a more goal-directed performance state that aids in the emergence of spontaneous creative activity [63,64]. Additionally, a recent study showed that alcohol intake, which decreases frontal lobe activity, appears to improve creativity [65]. However, improvisational music performance and alcohol consumption states are quite peculiar and distinct from psychography. Future research is needed to thoroughly compare psychography to other similar states and more precisely elucidate the relationship between frontal lobe function and depth, intensity, and complexity of written content produced in this interesting mediumistic state.

Overall, the fact that experienced mediums had lower rCBF than less expert mediums may be due to their having more years of practice and doing more psychographies per month (Table 1, Figure 1). However, considering the experts' high complexity scores for their psychographed content, it is not clear whether the decreased brain activity is related to more efficient brain function during the task, or the influence of other variables.

Although aware of problems in conceptualizing trance, for the purpose of this study we used a more consensual and phenomenological definition of trance proposed by Cardeña [66]: a temporary alteration of consciousness, identity, and/or behavior evidenced by at least two of the following: (1) marked alteration of consciousness; (2) narrowed awareness of immediate surroundings; (3) movements experienced as being beyond one's control. In qualitative terms, since there is no one single expression of mediumship but rather important differences between people and occasions, our subjects reported varying types of "spiritual

contact". The less expert mediums were emotionally affected and reported feeling inspired during psychography, and being in a semi-conscious state – phrases came to them as if dictated – in relation to the written content, whereas the experienced mediums said that they were "out of their bodies" and had no control over the content "elaborated by the spirit". The superior temporal gyrus, which contains the auditory cortex, was activated during psycography for less expert mediums, who heard phrases as if they were being dictated, but deactivated in the experienced subjects, who had no conscious control over the psychographed content. The superior temporal gyrus is also involved in linguistic comprehension and is a key area related to auditory hallucination in psychotic patients [49].

Decreased activity of the left prefrontal cortex, which is involved in categorizing and rating experience [3,67] may be partly related to the subjective account of dissociative trance as reported by the experienced mediums, and is consistent with the notion of automatic writing rather than planning written content. Studies of language processing consistently show involvement of the superior temporal cortex and precentral gyrus as crucial for processing words and their hypoperfusion results in selective impairment of written work [46,47,68]. Consistent activation in these areas during writing is expected in healthy subjects. These regions were hypoactivated in the experienced subjects' brains during psychography, and they did not show the impaired written text we would expect with hypoactivation presented [46,47,68]. The lower level of activity in the temporal cortex and precentral gyrus, as well as the hippocampus and anterior cingulate in experienced mediums lends support to their subjective reports of being unaware of content written during psychography. It should be noted that no changes in CBF were observed in the caudate nuclei previously described in glossolalia. Subjects also showed a reduced CBF in the right prefrontal cortex, and these discrepancies may be related to different processing language-related tasks during these trance-like states [25].

Subjects attributed their trance writing to "spirits". Compared to normal writing, less expert mediums showed more activation in the same cognitive-processing areas during psychography, whereas experienced mediums showed a significantly lower level of activation (Figure 1). The less expert ones had to "work harder", as shown by their relatively higher levels of activation of the cognitive processing area during psychography. Experienced mediums showed significantly reduced rCBF changes during psychography, which is consistent with the notion of automatic (non-conscious) writing and their claims that an "outer source" was planning the written content. Brain regions known to be involved in planning writing were activated less, even though the content was more elaborate than their non-trance writing (Table 3). These findings are not consistent with faking or role-playing, both of which have been offered as explanations for psychography. Planning-related neural circuits would presumably be recruited to compose more elaborate texts if the subjects were faking trance states (Figure 1, Table 4). On the contrary, studies of cognitive-processing regions involved in reasoning and planning written content [46–48] showed decreased activity in the experienced mediums, who reported that they were not conscious of psychographed content and had no control over it. Subjects reported that their trance state involved a "relaxed state of mind". The state of relaxation alone might explain the lower overall activity of the brain, but the fact that subjects produced complex content in a trance dissociative state suggests they were not merely relaxed. Moreover, relaxation seems an unlikely explanation for the underactivation of brain areas specifically related to the cognitive processing being carried out. As the first step toward understanding the neural mechanisms involved in non-pathological dissociation, we emphasize that this finding deserves further investigation both in terms of replication and explanatory hypotheses.

In non-pathological conditions, a person may benefit from these dissociative abilities, although such a disposition may develop into dissociative pathology after adverse/traumatic events [3–5]. The absence of current Axis I or II mental disorders [14] in the groups is in line with current evidence that dissociative experiences are common in the general population and not necessarily related to mental disorders, especially in religious/spiritual groups [16]. Mediums' blood-flow alterations differed between experienced and less expert subjects, which highlights the diversity of the dissociative phenomenon in healthy subjects, and suggests that further research should address criteria for distinguishing between healthy and pathological dissociative expressions in the scope of mediumship.

A limitation of this study arises from the small sample size, which obviated the detailed analysis that a larger sample could support. We only used a threshold for clusters as a correction for significance since correction for multiple comparisons would be over-conservative for this exploratory study. However, in a larger study, we could run a more robust analysis to correct for multiple comparisons, as well as small volume correction. Neither did we perform a single-subject analysis since we considered this study to be exploratory, and therefore simplified the analysis to random-effects in an attempt to determine basic differences between groups.

Different lines of research are coming together in a promising development pointing toward more profound comprehension of consciousness and dissociation [7–9,17,31]. Although the study of spiritual experiences such as mediumship is seminal to the development of our current understanding of the mind, their relevance was neglected by researchers in the past century [10,19]. The present study provides useful preliminary data and points to the potential utility of epistemologically informed in-depth studies of dissociative states of consciousness and spiritual experiences to improve our understanding of the mind and its relationship with the brain.

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Author Contributions

Conceived and designed the experiments: JFP AN. Performed the experiments: JFP AMA LC FL AN. Analyzed the data: JFP AN. Contributed reagents/materials/analysis tools: JFP AMA LC FL AN. Wrote the paper: JFP AMA LC FL AN.

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Journalists investigate causes of sleepy epidemic in Kazakhstan

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Journalists investigate causes of sleepy epidemic in Kazakhstan. Sleepy epidemic strikes Kazakhstan village

A film crew from Russia spent eight days in the republic of Kazakhstan, in the village of Kalachi, located some 445 kilometers from the capital of Astana. The village became known for a strange sickness that was sowing panic among local residents. Thus, nearly every resident of the village can fall asleep at any time, whatever they may do. RT journalists made a special documentary about the bizarre phenomenon.

In this small village, residents fall asleep one after another. They can sleep for a few days before they wake up and continue to live on. They often suffer from severe headaches. Doctors either find no changes in the bodies of those who wake up after sleeping, or diagnose diffuse cerebral edema. The sleep epidemic started more than two years ago and still continues.

According to the journalists, it is not only local residents, but also visitors, who may fall asleep in the village, although the film-makers did not feel sleepy during their stay in the village.

The authors of the documentary took samples of water from the local area to deliver them to Moscow for examination. They also measured the radiation level.

In the USSR, the village of Kalachi did not appear on any map due to secret uranium mines, which the locals blame for their misfortunes. In 1980, the mines were closed. The sleepy epidemic struck the village less than three years ago. Kazakh scientists have taken samples of air and water in the village, but they could not understand the cause of the ailment.

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Sic Transit Gloria

Jubokko (樹木子, lit. “Vampire Tree”) is a youkai tree that appears in many books related to Japanese youkai.

It appears in former battlefieldswhere many people have died, and its appearance does not differ that much from ordinary trees. Since it becomes a youkai tree by sucking up large quantities of blood of the dead, it lives on human blood. When a human being happens to be passing by, it captures the victim and, changing its branches into the shape of a tube, sucks the blood out of the victim. The Jubokko that sucks life out of human beings in such way always maintains a fresh appearance. When a Jubokko is cut, blood trickles out. It is said that a Jubokko branch could heal and decontaminate an injured person.

Friday, May 18th, 2012

Tagged: •Jubokko •youkai tree •vampire tree •blood •japanese folklore •yokai •tree
Options: go back go home random entry
62 notes

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In a field by a stream in Jackson county lies the mysterious artifact called Judaculla Rock. Judaculla rock is an outcropping of soapstone, covered with hundreds of ancient carvings. The origin and meaning of these carvings is unknown. Archaeologists think that they were carved over the course of several centuries, beginning about five thousand years ago. But according to one legend, these markings in this huge boulder are the handiwork of a giant.

The name Judaculla is a corruption of the Cherokee word Tsul`kälû´, the name of a giant who was said to live in the area. Tsul`kälû´ literally translates as "he has them slanting." In this case, what's slanting is the giant's eyes, so the name Tsul`kälû´ is usually translated as "Slant-Eyed Giant." Someone must have been being polite to this towering figure when they gave him that name, because that's not the most distinguishing physical feature of the giant. Tsul`kälû´ was over seven feet tall, with seven fingers on each hand and seven fingers on each foot. Tsul`kälû´ is also reportedly tremendously ugly, with an exceptionally hairy body and claw-like fingernails and toenails. An important and powerful figure in the Cherokee cosmos, Tsul`kälû´ had control of the winds, the rain, thunder, and lightning. Tsul`kälû´ also owned all of the game in the mountains, and it was only with his blessing that the Cherokee were allowed to hunt. Tsul`kälû´ was actively involved in he lives of the Cherokee, even at one point taking a human wife.

There are several different explanations for how Tsul`kälû´ came to make the carvings on the rock. One explanation is that the carvings are the hunting laws that Tsul`kälû´ lay down for the Cherokee to obey. Another says that the markings were caused by Tsul`kälû´ using the rock to catch himself as he jumped down from his farm, which was located in a nearby clearing known as Judaculla Old Fields.

One more story focuses on a carving in the lower right hand side of the rock that resembles a seven-toed foot. It's said that Tsul`kälû´ was angered by a Cherokee hunting party that had trespassed on his land. In his rage, he jumped down from his farm to run the hunters off of his land, and hit the rock with such strength that he forced his footprint into it.

Early European settlers viewed both Judaculla Rock and the nearby Judaculla Old Fields with a degree of superstition, and insisted that the area was the home of the "Indian Satan." Rumors circulated of a giant snake that ives in the area that would swallow people by the dozen.

The rock seems to have been an important focal point of Cherokee life in the area, and it's said that it was the site of Cherokee religious rituals up until the forced expulsion in the 19th Century. Archaeological evidence has shown that the soapstone in the area around the rock was quarried and shaped on the site over the course of several centuries.

The meaning of the carvings on the rock itself remain mysterious, although archaeologists think that some of the more recent carvings may be a map of the area noting the availability of resources and game.

Judaculla Rock is unique among rock carving, or *petroglyph*, sites East of the Mississippi. There are 1,548 individual carvings that have been identified on the rock, more than three times the number of the next-nearest petroglyph boulder in this part of the country at Track Rock Gap in Northern Georgia.

Recent excavations at the site have revealed that Judaculla Rock was once part of a larger site, arranged with other boulders that have since been removed or destroyed. The rock is also part of a large number of petroglyphs that are found carved on rocks and cliffs across the entire Southern Appalachians, and which are only now being rediscovered and extensively catalogued.

How to get there

Judaculla Rock is a historic site owned and operated by Jackson County and is open every day until dusk.

The Rock is located near Cullowhee, North Carolina. From US 74, take Exit 85 to Business Route 23 through Sylva. Stay on 23 for a little over a mile, then turn left onto 107. Drive 8 miles south on 107 and take a left onto Caney Fork Road. Go two and a half miles, then turn left onto a gravel road and drive for another mile.

There's a parking lot for visitors and a recently constructed viewing platform around the rock.

Judaculla Rock lies in a field in Jackson County. It's North Carolina's most famous petroglyph site. 1,548 designs have been identified on the stone, more than any other boulder east of the Mississippi.

1,548 designs have been identified on the stone, more than any other boulder east of the Mississippi.

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Kalpavriksha

Kalpataru, the divine tree of life being guarded by mythical creatures Kinnara and Kinnari, flying Apsara and Devata. 8th century Pawon temple, Java, Indonesia.

Kalpavriksha (Devanagari: कल्पवृक्ष), also known as **kalpataru**, **kalpadruma** or **kalpapādapa**, is a wish-fulfilling divine tree in Hindu mythology. It was mentioned in Sanskrit literature from the earliest sources onwards. Sage Durvasa meditated under the Kalpavriksha. Shiva's daughter Ashok Sundari was created from Kalpavriksha tree by Parvati, to alleviate her loneliness.

The kalpavriksha originated during the Samudra manthan or "churning of the ocean of milk" along with the kamadhenu, the divine cow providing for all needs. The king of the gods, Indra, returned with this tree to his paradise.

A kalpavriksha is mentioned in the Sanskrit work Mānāsara as a royal emblem. In Hemādri's work Caturvargacīntama, the kalpavriksha is said to be a tree of gold and precious stones.[1]

Other trees are also referred to as the Kalpavriksha.

- At Mangaliyawas near Ajmer, Rajasthan, two revered trees (Male and Female) are more than 800 years old. Known as kalpavrikshas, they are worshipped on an Amavasya day in the Hindu month of Shravan.

Kalpavriksha in Mangaliyawas (near Ajmer, Rajasthan in India)

- There is a kalpavriksha trees (Male and Female) which are more than 1000 years old in Banswara District of Rajasthan.
- According to the Padma Purana, a unique baobab near Barabanki is the Parijaat tree, Kintoor.
- At Jyotirmath, Badrinath in Uttaranchal, renowned as the residence of Adiguru Shankaracharya, there is a large, ancient mulberry tree known locally as the kalpavriksha. This tree is a Morus tree, or mulberry. Its unique property is that it never loses a single leaf by itself and is evergreen.
- The Banyan tree has been referred to as the kalpavriksha.
- In certain parts of India, especially coastal areas, the coconut tree is referred to as kalpavriksha or kalpataru because of its ability to amply provide for human needs.

See also

- Kalpataru Day
- Cassia fistula the Golden Shower Tree which is special in Thai culture.
- Dictionary of Hindu Lore and Legend[2]

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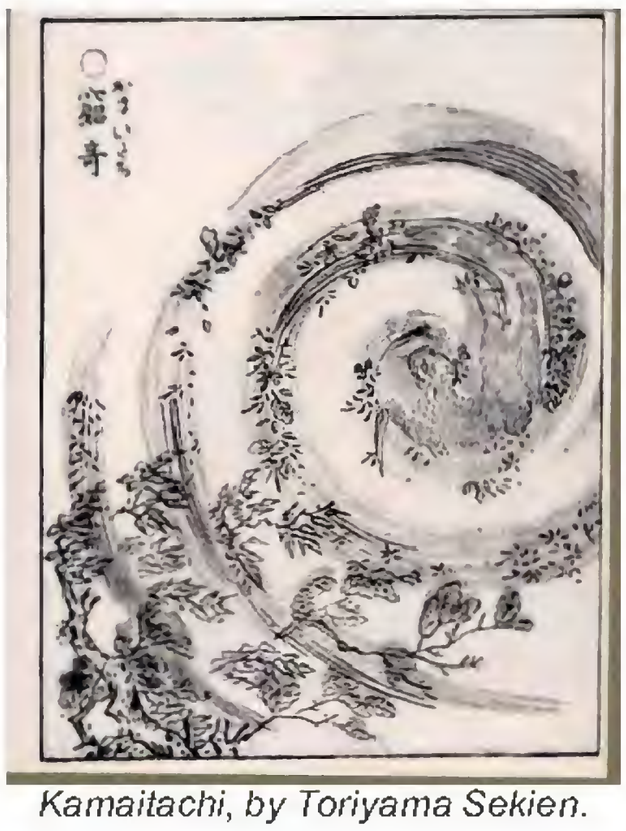
March 23, 2013Andrew Kincaid



Kamaitachi, by Toriyama Sekien.

Night has fallen. You've had a hard day at work, and you're walking home, cutting across a grassy field to save time. All of a sudden, a huge gust of wind knocks you to the ground. When you stand, you happen to look down and notice that your pants have been sliced open at the calf, and a closer look shows an inch long slit in your skin. There is no blood, and no pain. Yet, anyway. The pain will set in later, and you'll suffer for days as the wound will take a long time to heal.

So what in the world just happened? Well my friend, you have just run afoul of the kamaitachi, or the sickle weasel. The critters are yokai that hang around the Koshin'etsu region for the most part. They are said to resemble weasels, with sharp, sickle like claws. Accounts of their attacks vary; some claim that they attack in trios, while others claim the monsters work alone.

What they can agree on is that the sickle weasel first attacks with a strong gust of wind, or a whirlwind, knocking their victim to the ground (they only attack men, by the way). The second phase of the attack is using their sickle-like claws to cut a deep gash into the skin, and the final phrase is to apply a medicine that numbs pain and stops bleeding. The attacks happen instantaneously, with the weasel moving faster than the eye can see (which begs the question of how anyone knows what the thing looks like, but that's another matter).

The kamaitachi appear in anime, manga, and novels. So far there don't seem to be any modern accounts of attacks by these elusive creatures. Like most things folkloric, it seems the sickle weasel exists exclusively in the minds of those who believe in them.

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In Slavic folklore, Koschei is an archetypal male antagonist, described mainly as abducting the hero's wife. None of the existing tales actually describes his appearance, though in book illustrations, cartoons and cinema he has been most frequently represented as a very old and ugly-looking man. Koschei is also known as Koschei the Immortal or Koschei the Deathless as well as Tsar Koschei suggests that his name may be derived from the word kost meaning "bone", implying a skeletal appearance.

Koschei cannot be killed by conventional means targeting his body. His soul (or death) is hidden separate from his body inside a needle, which is in an egg, which is in a duck, which is in a hare, which is in an iron chest (sometimes the chest is crystal and/or gold), which is buried under a green oak tree, which is on the island of Buyan in the ocean.

As long as his soul is safe, he cannot die. If the chest is dug up and opened, the hare will bolt away; if it is killed, the duck will emerge and try to fly off. Anyone possessing the egg has Koschei in their power. He begins to weaken, becomes sick, and immediately loses the use of his magic. If the egg is tossed about, he likewise is flung around against his will. If the egg or needle is broken (in some tales, this must be done by specifically breaking it against Koschei's forehead), Koschei will die.

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Kashchey the Immortal by Viktor Vasnetsov, 1926-1927.

In Slavic folklore, **Koschei** (Russian: Кощéй, tr. *Koshchey*; IPA: [kɐˈɕːej], also **Kashchei** or **Kashchey**; Ukrainian: Кощій, **Koshchiy**; Polish: **Kościej**; Czech: **Kostěj**) is an archetypal male antagonist, described mainly as abducting the hero's wife. None of the existing tales actually describes his appearance, though in book illustrations, cartoons and cinema he has been most frequently represented as a very old and ugly-looking man. Koschei is also known as **Koschei the Immortal** or **Koschei the Deathless** (Russian: Кощéй Бессмéртный, Ukrainian: Кощій Безсмертний or Кащик невмирущий, Czech: *Kostěj nesmrtelný*), as well as Tsar **Koschei**. As is usual in transliterations, there are numerous other spellings, such as Koshchei, Kashchej and Kaschei. The spelling in Russian and other Slavic languages (like Polish "Kościej" or Czech "Kostěj") suggests that his name may be derived from the word *kost'* (Rus. кость, Pol. kość) meaning "bone", implying a skeletal appearance.[]

Koschei cannot be killed by conventional means targeting his body. His soul (or death) is hidden separate from his body inside a needle, which is in an egg, which is in a duck, which is in a hare, which is in an iron chest (sometimes the chest is crystal and/or gold), which is buried under a green oak tree, which is on the island of Buyan in the ocean. As long as his soul is safe, he cannot die. If the chest is dug up and opened, the hare will bolt away; if it is killed, the duck will emerge and try to fly off. Anyone possessing the egg has Koschei in their power. He begins to weaken, becomes sick, and immediately loses the use of his magic. If the egg is tossed about, he likewise is flung around against his will. If the egg or needle is broken (in some tales, this must be done by specifically breaking it against Koschei's forehead), Koschei will die.

In folk tales

"The Death of Koschei the Deathless" is a Russian fairy tale collected by Alexander Afanasyev in *Narodnye russkie skazki*, which itself is included in *The Red Fairy Book*.

Koschei also appears in Russian versions of the story "The Frog Princess".

In popular culture

Koshchey the Deathless by Ivan Bilibin, 1901.

- In Vasilisa Prekrasnaya (Vasilisa the Beautiful), a Russian cartoon based on the Russian fairy tale.
- A villain in Igor Stravinsky's *Firebird*.
- In Alexander Veltman's *Koshchei bessmertny: Bylina starogo vremeni* (Koshchei the

immortal: A bylina of old times, 1833), a parody of historical adventure novels, the hero, Iva Olelkovich, imagines that his bride has been captured by Koschei.

- Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov wrote an opera involving Koschei, titled Кащей бессмертный, or Kashchey the Deathless.
- In the Soviet animated film *Beloved Beauty* (1958).
- Mercedes Lackey's novel of Stravinsky's *Firebird* features Katschei as the main villain, retelling the classic tale for a modern audience. Also, in her 500 Kingdoms series, the Katschei is referenced in the novels *The Fairy Godmother* and *Fortune's Fool.*
- Koschei appears as an antagonist to the heroic demon Hellboy in the 2007 comic book *Hellboy: Darkness Calls*. The Baba Yaga will grant him death only through Hellboy's destruction, but in *Hellboy*, Koschei's soul is hidden in an egg, inside a duck, inside a hare, inside a goat. Vasilisa Prekrasnaya also appears and helps Hellboy. Koschei's origin story is later revealed in (as yet uncollected) backup stories to single issues of *Hellboy: The Wild Hunt.*
- In *The Sandman: Fables and Reflections*, Koschei's emerald heart (or, more likely a piece of green glass being passed off as such) passes into the possession of a Romani trader, then a werewolf, and finally Baba Yaga.
- In *Monday Begins on Saturday* by Arkady and Boris Strugatsky, as one of the creatures held in the NIIChaVo institute.
- Nina C. Young wrote *Kashchei* (2010), a music composition for nine instruments and electronics based on the layers that conceal Koschei's death.[1]
- Koschei appears as an immortal Russian warrior in the dark fantasy novel *Fury of the Witch Queen* (2012) by Joseph Robert Lewis. The novel also features Baba Yaga as Koschei's mother.
- Koschei appears as a character in the MMORPG *RuneScape*, under the name "Koschei the Deathless".
- Koschei appears as a character in John C. Wright's "War of the Dreaming" novels. He offers to save the hero's wife, if the hero will agree to take the life of a stranger.
- Catherynne Valente's novel *Deathless* is a retelling of the Koschei story set against a backdrop of 20th-century Russian history.[2]
- A reference to Koschei is found in the role-playing game book *The Plains of Howling Darkness* of the *Fabled Lands* series. An immortal tyrant named Kaschuf the Deathless keeps a steppe village under his yoke until the player releases his soul from a locket kept hidden on an island in another book in the series, *Over the Blood-Dark Sea.*
- H. Beam Piper named an industrial planet Koshchei in his novel *Junkyard Planet*, aka *Cosmic Computer*, about the search for a computer called Merlin that was so advanced it could predict the future.
- Koschei was the name given to an early incarnation, and also an alternate version, of the Master in the *Doctor Who* range of novels.
- A Wesen called a Koschei appears in season three of the NBC show *Grimm*, depicted

as a zombie-like creature with transparent skin that can either heal or kill with a touch.
• In the book *The Unexpected Enlightenment of Rachel Griffin* by L. Jagi Lamplighter, Koschei is one of the Terrible Five—five sorcerers considered so evil that they were turned to stone, whose release caused a reign of terror.
• The demon lord Kostchtchie from the *Dungeons & Dragons* fantasy roleplaying game was inspired by Koschei.
• In the novel, *Monster Hunter Alpha* by Larry Correia, Koschei the Deathless is portrayed as a werewolf that lived for seven centuries, a lifetime powered by a mystical amulet that granted immortality.

- Phylactery
- Baš Čelik, arguably the same figure in Serbian folklore.
- Horcrux

1. **Jump up ^** Composer website (Nina C. Young): www.ninacyoung.com/Works.html
2. **Jump up ^** Author interview: [1]

- Sir James George Frazer (1854–1941). The Golden Bough.
- The Golden Bough by Sir James George Frazer (Project Gutenberg)
- The Death of Koshchei the Deathless from Andrew Lang's Red Fairy Book
- Old Russia Entry on "Koshchey" also contains a link to a folk story proper.
- [2] Referencing Episode.

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LA To San Fran In 35 Minutes? Hyperloop CEO Says Speed Tube Could Become Reality

cbslocal.com

PLAYA VISTA (CBSLA.com) — It takes about six hours to drive from Los Angeles to San Francisco – depending on your speed – and more than an hour to fly.

But in the future, the trip may take a matter of minutes.

Designers of the speed tube called Hyperloop say they are one step closer to making that happen.

Tesla founder Elon Musk says the technology is being developed with the help of about 25 UCLA graduate architecture students at a facility in Playa Vista.

Hyperloop has teamed up with the students to create the tube technology, designed to connect cities less than 300 miles apart.

"They look at this like a blank sheet of paper on which they can realize their fantasies," UCLA professor Craig Hodgetts said.

On top of pylons is a hovering capsule inside a low-pressurized tube, which can reach speeds of up to 760 mph.

"The only resistance would be the air in front of the capsule, which we moved to the back by using a compressor," Hyperloop CEO Dirk Ahlborn said.

A trip from L.A. to San Francisco would only take about 35 minutes. And because it is strictly run on solar power, developers say a ride would cost passengers about $30.

Students from around the world working on the project now have stock options in the company.

Ahlborn says within about 10 years and with about $16 billion Hyperloop could become a reality.

"It could be very easily put together. It's more about thinking figuring out how to make it a good business," he said.

Hyperloop is looking for people with different backgrounds to become involved with the project. For more information visit Hyperloop's page at JumpStartFund.

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Lake View's most famous piece of graveside sculpture stands atop the grave of Francis Haserot and his family, near the Mark Hanna mausoleum at the edge of the cemetery proper.

The Haserots, it turns out, are in the institutional-sized canned good business, and are famous for the quality of their product. Their company, Northen Haserot, supplies hotels, restaurants, schools, hospitals, and other institutions with canned meats, seafood, dairy, beverages, and produce, as well as certain types of food-service equipment and cleaning chemicals.

Apparently Haserot food is quite good. Ken, who e-mailed me on the topic, writes, "They had a quite good-quality line of products, a cut above many of the better-known brands. Their brand would very rarely be found in grocery stores, but sold quickly when someone was unloading a misplaced shipment. My mother worked for them in the 1950s; she used to bring home samples and we'd chow down and love it."

Northern Haserot was founded in Cleveland in 1892 and has been located there ever since. They only ship to the Cleveland, Akron, Canton, Youngstown, Toledo, and Columbus metropolitan areas, but they manage to operate two distribution facitilites with 125,000 and 60,000 square feet of space, as well as a USDA federally inspected meat plant. You can read more about the company at www.northernhaserot.com.

What's clear is that the Haserots' skill in shipping big cans of food is surpassed only by their impeccable taste in art. The statue at their cemetery plot was sculpted in 1924 by Herman Matzen.

The name I've always heard attached to the piece is "The Angel of Death Victorious." The angel has his hands folded atop something that most people mistakenly call a sword. It would make sense, but in this case he's holding an upside down torch, symbolizing a life extinguished. His pose is creepy enough, but the years have streaked his bronze skin and caused tears of discolored metal to stream from his blank eyes.

I've spoken to people who made pilgrimmages to Cleveland just to see this statue. In a grand cemetery full of magnificent funereal art--including a wide assortment of religious figures--the Haserot Angel stands head and shoulders above the rest.

I leave you with two pictures of the angel by one of my favorite photographers, Colleen McCallie.

Northern Haserot Foodservice Distribution
Old Bones: Angels/Francis Haserot
Virtual Tourist: Lake View Cemetery, Garden of the Dead
Ghosts of the Mississippi: Cemetery Photography

Back

forgottenohio@yahoo.com

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The town of Blowing Rock, North Carolina, is named for The Blowing Rock, an outcropping of rock studded with crystals that hangs over a deep valley in the Appalachian Mountains. The rock is famous for the constant, strong upward draught that comes out of the valley below the rock. This wind is so steady that in the winter, snow will fall upwards around he rock.

The legend that explains this unusual phenomenon is a romantic tale of love triumphing over duty and difference.

Once, long ago, a young Chickasaw woman and her father moved deep into the mountains to escape the constant war between the Chickasaw and the Cherokee. One day, the young woman was out gathering food when she happened upon a handsome young man hunting in the woods. The two fell instantly in love. But they were also aware of the danger their love posed. The young man was a Cherokee. The two were lovers who should have been enemies.

They met secretly in the woods. For months, they enjoyed each others company in secret places in the mountains and ignored what the rest of the world would think.

Then, one evening, the two lovers saw a strange red glow in the sky. They felt drawn towards a certain cliff, and stood on its edge as they watched the sky grow a deeper and deeper red, until it was almost the color of fresh blood.

The young man understood the sign. He knew that it was a warning that the Cherokee and Chickasaw nations were preparing for a huge battle, that blood would be lost on both sides.

The young man knew his duty was with his Cherokee people. He knew his heart was with his Chickasaw love. Unwilling to decide which meant more to him, the young man chose another way. He leapt of the rock the two were standing on into the valley below.

The young woman, horrified at what had happened, prayed that the gods who controlled the wind would send her love back to her. They heard her prayer, and the young man was lifted back up into her arms.

The young lovers journeyed together to each others lands, and used the example of their love to bring peace to the two nations. And the wind still blows strongly at Blowing Rock.

How To Get There

The Blowing Rock is a North Carolina's oldest privately-owned attraction. In addition to the rock itself, The Blowing Rock offers hiking trails and a gift shop. The Blowing Rock is located on Highway 321 South, near the town of Blowing Rock ad Grandfather Mountain.

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The legend of Peter Dromgoole and Fannie is a popular campus story at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Dromgoole, a student who supposedly died in a duel in 1832, is said to be buried under a stone known as Dromgoole Rock.

The story goes that Peter Dromgoole and another student were both in love with a young girl from town named Fannie. The rivals happened upon each other on campus one night, had a few nasty words to share, then agreed to meet the following day for a duel.

Dueling was, even then, strongly discouraged in the student handbook. But students being students, rumors of the illicit duel began spreading rapidly across the campus, and word reached Fannie early the next morning. She rushed to Piney Point just in time to see Peter shot through the heart. Peter collapsed onto a boulder, which was permanently stained with his blood.

In a textbook case of a student prank gone bad, the witnesses and seconds hastily buried Peter's body and moved the rock where he had died on top of his grave to cover the fresh dirt. Ironically, this had been the very rock where the two lovers had often met.

The bloodstains on the rock where Peter died never disappeared. Deep rd blotches can still be seen on Dromgoole rock to this day.

Peter Dromgoole's disappearance was immediately noticed. His rival and murderer spread the rumor that Dromgoole had run away to join the army, but rumors of his part in followed him until the man was forced to flee the campus, never to be heard from again.

Fannie, pining for Peter, died later that summer. Her last words were said to be that Peter was lonely and she was going to meet him. The shadowy figures of the two lovers meeting in the woods by Dromgoole Rock have been often seen since.

Dromgoole Rock is located at Piney Point, on the land of the appropriately gothic Gimgoul Castle. This imposing building, while unconnected to the legend, adds a further air of mystery about the place. Gimgoul Castle was constructed in the 1920s and is the home to the UNC's secretive Gimgoul Society. The rock is located on private land and visitors are not welcome.

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Along the Outer Banks, The Oregon Inlet separates Bodie Island from Pea Island and joins the Pamlico Sound to the Atlantic. It's a major shipping channel and an important route for fishing vessels. The Bonner Bridge stretches acoss it, carrying tourists up and down the Outer Banks. It's hard to imagine the North Carolina coast without this seemingly permanent feature. But the Oregon Inlet didn't exist until 1846, when on a single night a hurricane carved a channel and saved a ship.

According to the Legend, in September of 1846 a trading ship named the *Oregon* was making the return voyage to Edenton from Bermuda. The journey had been smooth until the last days, when the winds kicked up and the skies turned dark grey. It was soon obvious to the experienced sails that a hurricane was coming, and that their ship as in danger.

The ship put on steam, struggling to reach the safety of port before the storm struck. But it was too late. The hurricane caught up with the *Oregon*, and the skall ship was tossed by the increasingly violent waves.

The crew of the *Oregon* fought valiantly into the night to keep their ship afloat, but as the darkness grew deeper around them, the winds grew stronger and the waves grew higher. The crew silently began to give up hope.

Suddenly, a tremendous surge came in from the sea. The boat was lifted high into the air, and the crew felt the deck tilting beneath them. They feared all was lost, but suddenly the rocking stopped. Though still pounded by the wind, the ship had stopped rocking.

The crew were astounded. The realized that the enormous wave had picked the *Oregon* and deposited her on a sand bar. Amazed at their luck, the crew safely rode out the night able the churning waves.

The next morning,the crew discovered that beside their ship was a wide channel. Consulting their charts, they were able to determine their location and realized that this inlet wasn't on any of their maps. The huge wave that lifted them up had, at the same time, forced open this new passage in the outer banks. The *Oregon* had been the first ship to travel through it, seconds after it had come into being.

When the *Oregon* arrived back at port in Edenton, they let the town know of the new passage. Soon, it began to be called the Oregon Inlet, in honor of the first ship and first crew to pass through.

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In 1866, a woman named Laura Foster was murdered in Wilkes County. A man named Tom Dula, pronounced "Dooley", was convicted and hanged for the crime. That murder and the name Tom Dooley live on in one of the most famous folk songs ever to come out of North Carolina.

The traditional version of the story casts Tom Dula as a dashing, handsome confederate veteran. When Dula returns from the war, he meets Laura Foster, a young woman who was being courted by a schoolteacher from the North by the name of Bob Grayson. Foster fell in love with Tom Dula, but so did another woman, Anne Melton. Melton was married, wealthy, beautiful, and insanely jealous. Learning that Dula was in love with Foster, not her, Anne Melton stabbed Laura Foster to death in a jealous rage.

Tom Dula was blamed for the murder. Tula fled, heading for Tennessee. Bob Grayson headed a posse to hunt down Tom Dula, and he was dragged back to Wilkes County. Dula, realizing that it was Anne Melton who committed the crime, confesses out of a chivalrous desire to save her from a death by hanging.

On May 1, 1868, Tom Dula was executed for the murder of Laura Foster. Grayson returned home to the North. Anne Melton went slowly insane from guilt, and years later as she was on her deathbed, the trees around her house filled with back cats and the air was filled with the smell of burning flesh as demons came to take her soul to Hell.

It's this version of the tale, a complicated story story that ends in the death of an innocent man, that became immortalized in a folk song that circulated in North Carolina for nearly 100 years before it was made nationally famous by the Kingston Trio in 1958. Their recording of the ballad Tom Dooley reached #1 on the Billboard R&B charts, and rose to the top of the country music charts.

It's said that Tom Dooley wrote this song himself. The legged has it that he that he was signing it, strumming along on his banjo, as he sat on top of his own coffin riding in the wagon on the way to his execution.

But the history behind the story of Tom Dula and the murder of Laura Foster are more than a little different from how he song tells it.

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Len Dong: an ancient shaman dance for modern Vietnam? - Hindustan Times

20140613 hindustantimes.com

Len Dong: an ancient shaman dance for modern Vietnam?

AFP

Hanoi, June 13, 2014

First Published: 19:13 IST(13/6/2014)

Last Updated: 19:27 IST(13/6/2014)

The Vietnamese spirit medium dances in a trance, attacking invisible enemies with a sword as drums beat, musicians chant, and dozens of curious onlookers watch in amazement.

Civil servant by day and practitioner of traditional spiritual possession rituals when the mood takes her, Nguyen Thi Hoa is clad in a richly embroidered red robe as she performs a Len Dong ceremony at a private Hanoi temple.

"I have no idea what I've been doing," Hoa told AFP after the five-hour performance, which involved at least 15 costume changes.

"I could not believe I had smoked like a chimney and drunk like a fish," the normally teetotal 52-year-old said.

"Could you tell me what I told you to do?" Hoa, who is not a professional Len Dong shaman and only undertakes the rituals when the spirits move her, asked friends who had watched the entire performance.

Len Dong, which uses musical invocations to lure spirits to possess mediums and communicate with others, has been performed in Vietnam for centuries.

Practitioners and attendees -- people can donate to help cover the costs of a Len Dong performance without having to directly participate -- usually turn to the ancient ritual to ease stress or hoping for help from the spirits with romantic or professional problems.

For decades, Len Dong was restricted by French colonial and Vietnamese communist leaders, but the tradition is enjoying a flurry of popularity since restrictions were relaxed a decade or so ago -- and some say it is a useful vent for stressed citizens.

Old cure for new ills?

Six years ago, Hoa began suffering from insomnia, lack of appetite and tiredness. Conventional doctors could not rid her of her ills.

On the advice of a friend, she visited a Len Dong practitioner, who told her to try performing the spirit possession ritual herself.

"To my surprise, my health started improving at once," she said, adding that she started

seeing positive changes at work as well.

Len Dong is an ancient Vietnamese custom which involves "calling the spirits of the dead into the bodies of the living to connect past and present," one of the main research books on the topic says.

Musicians play traditional songs to help the shaman enter a trance. Multiple assistants help the shaman to change costumes or prepare offerings -- from chickens to "ChocoPie" snack cakes -- for the altar.

During the ceremony -- an auspicious date for the event is carefully picked in advance by the shaman -- the practitioner will seemingly drift in and out of a trance, singing, chanting and dancing to the minimalist, rhythmic music.

"It's not just the insane dancing of people who have lost their dignity," said cultural researcher Ngo Duc Thinh.

The practise of Len Dong can help people under intense stress or suffering from low-level psychological disorders, Thinh, a renowned professor of Vietnamese culture at a top state research institute, said.

"They practice Len Dong to rid themselves of their problems and return to their normal life," the professor, who has spent more than three decades studying Len Dong, told AFP.

"As society develops, spiritual pressures multiply. Stress becomes more serious -- and this creates more chances for Len Dong," according to Thinh.

Social stigma

Hoa practices Len Dong at least twice a year.

"I don't dare tell my mother as she would say I was crazy," said the bureaucrat, who spends around 40 million dong (nearly $2,000) to put on each performance.

Her work colleagues, mostly communist party members, are also not aware of her Len Dong practice -- the ritual has at times been considered heresy, and was totally banned until the 1980s by the communists, although rituals continued in secret.

"I received several warnings from police, asking me to stop my practice," said a professional Len Dong practitioner, speaking on condition of anonymity about that period of time.

Even now, practicing Len Dong can carry a government fine of around $250 which aims to prevent private for-profit practitioners rather than genuine Len Dong devotees like Hoa.

"The government tried to ban it, but they in fact have failed. It's impossible to ban Len Dong," researcher Thinh said.

But it might be necessary to regulate it, some experts say.

Len Dong practitioners usually offer their services at temples between Vietnam's lunar new year -- usually around late January -- to the end of the third lunar month in April.

Since restrictions on the practice were lifted, business is booming and some newly wealthy Vietnamese are willing to pay up to $50,000 for a Len Dong service.

The trouble is, it is hard for people to tell the difference between genuine Len Dong practitioners and con artists.

"Several practitioners, who have only some ability, have used that to cheat people for money," one practitioner told AFP.

"That makes people confused -- they can't differentiate between real and fake Len Dong."

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Leucrota, Leocrocotta, Leucrocotta, Leucrocuta, Leukrokotta

From fantasy-faction.com - January 1, 5:17 PM

The leucrota is a a psychotic beast with a borderline sociopathic mindset from the Medieval era.

It is a a composite animal; a cross between a hyena-like luvecerviere beast and lion.

Pliny the Elder (Roman author, naturalist, and natural philosopher, as well as naval and army commander of the early Roman Empire) describes the leucrota as a hyena-like creature, which he calls "the swiftest of all beasts, about the size of an ass, with a stag's haunches, a lion's neck, tail and breast, badger's head, cloven hoof, mouth opening right back to the ears, and ridges of bone in place of rows of teeth—this animal is reported to imitate the voices of human beings."

There is often some confusion between the more wolf like Crocotta and the more lion like Leucrocotta and in some cases the two are looked upon as the same creature. Clearly meant to be two different types of animals, authors of bestiaries often mistook them for one another due to there alleged blood relation, similarity in name and there supposed ability to speak with a human voice.

Though this creature is shrouded in folktales and mystery it is often thought that the hyena may have been the bases for the Leucrota, however most researchers simply dismiss the creature as pure fiction...
http://bit.ly/19JjDPm

The leucrocotta is specifically mentioned in Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell (the 2004 first novel by British writer Susanna Clarke), in the chapter "Leucrocota, the Wolf of the Evening", where the titular character names another person in the book as one, as a reference to his personality and lifestyle...

...Vocal mimicry...
Leucrotas speak in voices chosen to lure their target away, where they proceed to feast upon the still living individual...
"...And the man who has been called approaches...but when it has drawn him away from his fellow-workers and has got him alone, it seizes and kills him and then makes a meal of him after luring him on with its call..."

Resources:
http://bit.ly/1dpZGI1
http://bit.ly/19K9ogU
http://bit.ly/1apfU9R
http://bit.ly/1lB0tAA
http://bit.ly/19JjDPm
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http://bit.ly/1aphc4K
http://bit.ly/1hgSQIA
http://bit.ly/1cnjKju

Image adapted from: http://bit.ly/1eWCka5

The Leucrota is said to be the fastest of all animals. He is the size of a donkey but he has a horse's head and a body that is part lion and part stag. The most peculiar thing about him is that his mouth opens all the way back to his ears. He has a voice that sound like people talking.

Article "Leucrota" created on 17 January 2000; last modified on 17 January 2000 (Revision 1). 61 words.
http://www.pantheon.org/articles/l/leucrota.html
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Lingerie thief who hid 2,000 items in ceiling caught as it collapsed from weight

mirror.co.uk

A lingerie thief who stole 2,000 pieces of underwear was caught - when the ceiling space he stashed them in collapsed due to the weight.

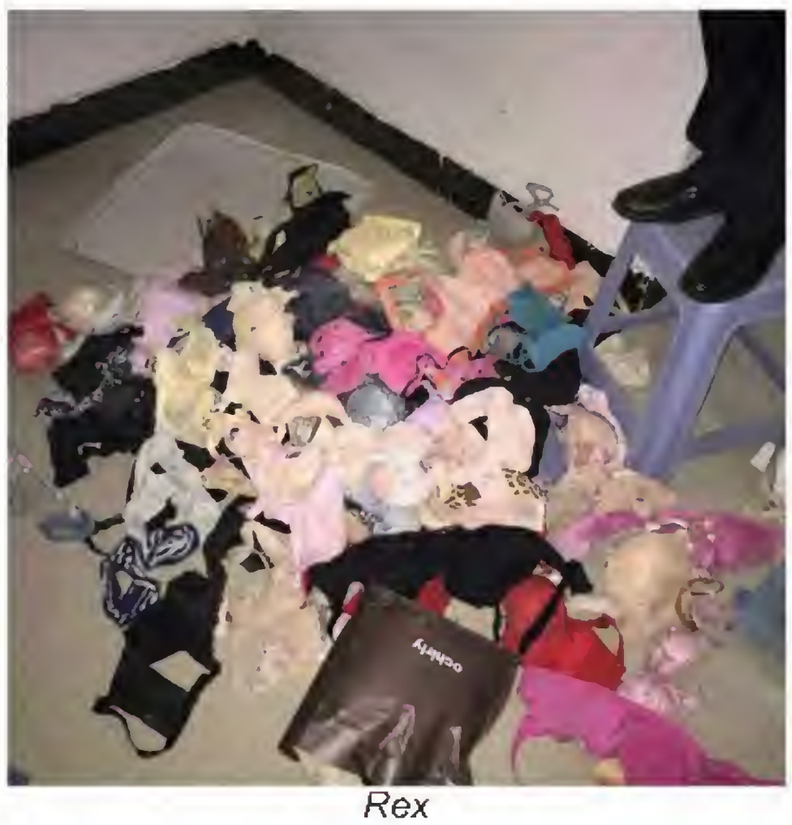
The thief spent a year stealing the knickers from women in his neighbourhood, Chinese media has reported.

Rex

Heavy Weight: Women's lingerie was stolen by a male resident and hidden in the false ceiling of a stairwell

His unusual crime was laid bare when police display the thousands of items taken on the ground.

The display shows the thief took a whole range of underwear during his spree - all sizes, shapes and colours.



Rex

Busted Thief: The thief was caught when the sheer weight of underwear taken made the ceiling collapse

The incident happened in Yulin city, Guangxi province, and a local resident has been detained by police.

The man, surnamed Tang and in his 30s, lives in the residential building and reportedly used a master key to open doors to around 750 households in the residential area.

Outer Wear: Police lined up every piece of underwear taken to show the scale of the crime

He then crept inside stealing the homeowners' underwear, Shanghaiist says.

The underwear thief has since made a confession, saying that he has had a mental illness since he was young boy, and doesn't know when his obsession with stealing women's underwear started, the website added.

Rex

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JEFF EDELSTEIN: Local mom calls Santa Claus, gets hit with $145 fine. Merry Christmas!

By Jeff Edelstein , The Trentonian

trentonian.com

Here's the story of how one mom called Santa Claus and it cost her $145. Almost cost her her car as well. Read on ...

Rachel — she'd prefer to keep her last name out of this — is a mom of three little girls, ages 2, 4, and 6. She and her family recently moved to Monroe from their Lawrenceville home. She's still getting the hang of things in her new surroundings, and like many a harried parent, time and energy is rarely on her side.

So last week, when her two youngest were "really going at, hitting each other, weren't listening to me when I told them to stop," Rachel decided to go with the nuclear option.

"That's it, I'm calling Santa," she said.

So Rachel pulled out her phone and gave Santa a call. Oldest trick in the book, never fails to snap the kiddos in line. Any mom or dad can attest to the power of a holding a phone to your ear and pretending to have a serious conversation with ol' Saint Nick.

"I was telling Santa my girls weren't behaving, weren't being respectful," she said. "I even brought up the naughty list."

All good so far, right? A parent doing what needs to be done.

A problem, though: Rachel was in her minivan at the time of the "call." Rachel was driving at the time of the "call."

Have you got an idea where this is heading?

"I passed a police officer — he was hiding behind a church — and so I threw my phone down," she said. "My 4-year-old thought I hung up on Santa. And I'm sure the officer thought I was involved in a heated conversation."

The officer pulled out behind Rachel. About three miles later, she was pulled over by a member of the Helmetta (population 2,178) police.

The officer approached Rachel and went through the normal routine, finally telling her he saw her talking on her phone. At this point, Rachel went into a delicate balancing act.

"I didn't want to ruin Santa Claus for my girls, so I was trying to be vague about it," she said. "So I told the officer my girls weren't behaving and that I had to call Santa Claus. I was trying to make him understand without giving it up. And he's just looking at me like I'm crazy."

Eventually, she convinced the officer to look at her phone log, and he would see there were no calls made — Santa or otherwise — during the time frame.

And that's when the second police officer pulled up.

Remember — three little kids. A recent move to a new town. Middle of the Christmas rush.

"I forgot to get my car inspected," she said. "It was just this month."

As a result of this infraction, the second officer wanted to impound the car.

"I could hear the two officers arguing," she said. "The one who first pulled me over was defending me, saying he wouldn't do it, wouldn't leave me and my two kids on the side of the road."

In the meantime, Rachel is having a heart attack.

"You have to understand, I'm vigilant about respect for law enforcement," she said. "I don't break the rules. I've never gotten a ticket in my life. And I'm trying to instill this in my children."

And so the first officer comes back to the window. Rachel's 4-year-old speaks up, says, "You don't have to arrest my mom." The officer agrees. He made the final call: No impounding of the car.

"I was thankful," Rachel said.

But there was the matter of the past due inspection …

"I got a ticket for $145," she said. "I'm guessing I'm the first person to ever get a ticket for talking to Santa Claus."

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Lost luggage turns up after 20 years

kvoa.com

Dec 17, 2014 11:16 PM by **Rebecca Taylor**

TUCSON - We've all heard of nightmarish lost luggage tales, when bags go missing at the airport. Often times they turn up. But after 20 years what are the chances?

This week a Tucson woman received such a phone call.

Maria Dellos thought the call was in reference to luggage lost four months ago. Incredibly the bag found was filled with art supplies that vanished two decades ago!

"Well I actually almost ignored the call because of telemarketing. All day long I get calls," says Dellos who owns Maria's Art Creations in Tucson, Arizona.

Dellos is a designer and teacher. On Tuesday someone from the Transportation Security Administration or TSA lost and found, at Tucson International Airport called her up.

"Well it's a handwritten note with my notes and address of 20 years ago," says Dellos holding a sheet of paper found inside her bag, containing art supplies from a trade show in Las Vegas.

"When I looked at this note, it was dated, it dated me as 20 years ago! And I was just absolutely blown away," said Dellos showing off some of the goods, valued at $600. "This is product, art product, very valuable stuff."

How and why the items turned up after all these years remains a mystery.

TSA Spokesperson Nico Melendez says, "Items that pre date our agency are interesting. But I understand that we just did some shuffling of equipment at the airport, so it's quite possible that we came across something that somebody left unattended for a long period of time."

Melendez says he enjoyed Dellos' use of plastic baggies, a modern day requirement for liquids.

The price tags on the items are not so modern, at $3.80.

"The price is of the past," Dellos says smiling. "I'm absolutely thankful to the TSA for calling me today and giving me great faith back into the airline industry."

As for the luggage mishandled back in August? Dellos says those were returned recently, as well.

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The **lotus tree** (Greek: λωτός, *lōtós*) is a plant that occurs in stories from Greek and Roman mythology.

The lotus tree is mentioned in Homer's *Odyssey*, the lotus tree bore a fruit that caused a pleasant drowsiness and was the only food of an island people called the Lotophagi or Lotus-eaters. When they ate of the lotus tree they would forget their friends and homes and would lose their desire to return to their native land in favor of living in idleness.[1] Botanical candidates for the lotus tree include the date-plum (*Diospyros lotus*), which is a sub-evergreen tree native to Africa that grows to about 25 feet bearing yellowish green flowers,[2] as well as Ziziphus lotus, a plant with an edible fruit closely related to the jujube family native to North Africa and the islands in the Gulf of Gabes such as Jerba.

In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*,[3] the nymph Lotis was the beautiful daughter of Neptune, the god of water and the sea. In order to flee the violent attention of Priapus, she invoked the assistance of the gods, who answered her prayers by turning her into a lotus tree.[4]

The Book of Job has two lines (40:21-22), with the Hebrew word Hebrew: צְאֲלִים,[5] which appear nowhere else in the bible. A common translation has been *lotus trees* since the publication of the Revised Version. However it is sometimes rendered simply as "shady trees".[6]

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On certain rainy nights, where US 70-A twists around a sweeping curve that passes by an old, overgrown underpass, drivers will see a young woman in a white evening dress standing by the side of the road, desperately trying to flag down a passing car. If anyone pulls over to help the young lady, she climbs meekly into the back seat of the car and explains that her name is Lydia, and that she's just been to a dance and now she's trying to get home. She gives the driver an address not too far away, and he kindly agrees to take her there. The driver may try to engage Lydia in conversation, but she seems distracted and in a world of her own, so he just leaves her in a respectful silence and concentrates on the road ahead.

When the car pulls in to the address that the young woman gave, the chivalrous driver invariably hops out to open the door for her — only to discover that she has vanished.

Perplexed, the man goes to the door, where an old woman answers. The man explains that he's picked up a young lady named Lydia by the overpass who asked to be brought to this address, but she's no longer in the car. He wonders if she may have run out before he could open the door, and he just wants to know if she's safe and if everything is as it should be.

A faint, pained smile of recognition passes over the old woman's face, as she reaches for a picture in a silver frame sitting on a table by the door. It's a photograph of the young woman the man drove to the house.

"Lydia was my daughter," the old woman says, "She died in a car wreck by that overpass in 1923. You're not the first one, and I suppose you won't be the last. Every so often, her spirit flags down a passing driver. I suppose she still doesn't understand what happened to her. I suppose she's still trying to get home."

That's why the overgrown underpass near Jamestown is called Lydia's Bridge. Drive past it on a rainy night and you may see Lydia, too.

How to get there

Lydia's Bridge is an on US-70 A or High Point Road, just south of Jamestown.

From I-85 South/Highway 70, take exit 118, which is also business 70.

From this road, takefirst exit you come for Jamestown / Sedgefield, and turn right at the top of the exit on to Vickery Chapel Road.

Go about half a mile to the traffic light where Vickery Chapel Road veers off to the left. Take that left, go another mile, and you'll come to High Point Road. Take a left on to High Point Road, the road curves around and goes under a railway underpass near the "Welcome to Jamestown" sign.

There's a turn-out spot on your right where you can park. Lydia's Bridge is the old underpass there on the right, just through some trees.

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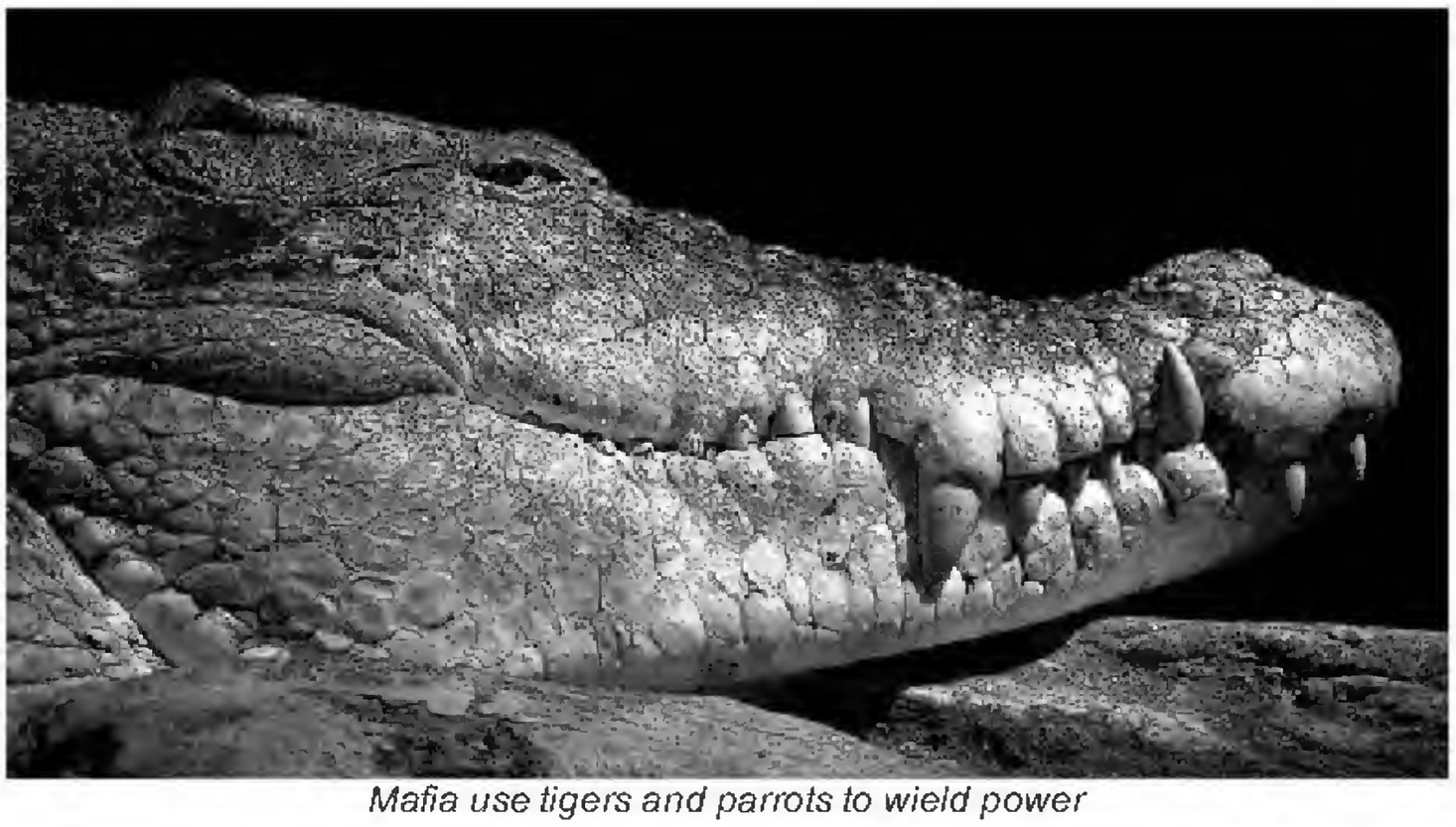
December 23, 2014



Mafia use tigers and parrots to wield power

Mafia use tigers and parrots to wield power

Published: 20 Nov 2014 16:20 GMT+01:00

Mafia bosses are using tigers, crocodiles and a host of other exotic animals - including drug-dealing parrots - to cement their grip on power. But international crime-fighters rarely hear about the phenomenon, a Europol spokesman told The Local.

Mobsters in Italy's Campania region have created a veritable circus of illegal pets, to help them carry out their mafia tasks, Corriere della Sera reported.

In one incident, the environmental police (Corpo Forestale dello Stato) in Orta di Atella found a crocodile on a rooftop.

The animal was used by the local mafia boss to intimidate business owners who were late paying the "pizzo" protection money at Christmas, Easter and the Ferr'Agosto holiday, Corriere said. "Pay up or be fed to the crocodile," the mafioso threatened.

The trade in dangerous animals in Italy has reached "an appalling level", the environmental police said.

In Mugnano the head of a mafia clan ordered a Siberian tiger be placed outside his home, harking back to 1980s Naples when the Giuliano di Forcella clan kept lions and tigers, Corriere said.

Søren Kragh Pedersen, spokesman for Europe's law enforcement agency, Europol, said "this is not something which we hear a lot about from the EU member states.

"The fact is that you will find criminals with an interest in exotic and dangerous animals and of course these can be used to threaten other people, but this is also the case with big aggressive dogs for instance," he told The Local.

But in Italy the use of exotic pets goes beyond intimidation. Recently the police seized a pair of grey parrots in the city's Traiano neighbourhood, only to discover they played a part in the drugs trade.

When a vet brought a ringing telephone to one of the parrots, it would imitate a human voice: "Hello, how much do you need?"

If the parrots became distressed, or someone tried to take them out of their cage, the birds had the response ready: "Now I'll shoot you!"

Snakes have also made their way onto the criminal market, with anacondas and rattlesnakes proving especially popular, the newspaper reported.

"People who trafficked drugs beforehand have now changed their markets to rare or dangerous animals," investigators told Corriere.

A boa constrictor can cost around €500, while a Siberian tiger carries a price tag of €30,000.

Marco Trapuzzano, environmental police commissioner, said that the use of animals had been associated with the Camorra - one of Italy's three most powerful mafia groups.

Mobsters' children in Orta di Atella, north of Naples, now show off their status with a parrot or monkey on their shoulder, Corriere said. Not far away, a mafia boss in Avellino reportedly requested two monkeys be placed in a room where he met affiliates.

But the mafia bosses appear unaware of the risks they could be taking with their new pets.

"Monkeys, for example, are classified as 'dangerous' not only because of the noted 'bite of the monkey' but also because they transmit deadly disease, like so many other exotic animals," Trapuzzano was quoted as saying.

The environmental police were not available to comment on the phenomenon when contacted by The Local.

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Hearse Stolen With Casket Inside

huffingtonpost.com

AP Posted: 12/29/2014 3:32 am EST Updated: 12/29/2014 3:59 am EST

AP

LOS ANGELES (AP) — A pastor's wife says a hearse was stolen from outside a Southern California church ahead of funeral services with a casket inside.

The Los Angeles Times reports Sunday (http://lat.ms/1H8pjVe) that the hearse was idling outside Ebenezer Baptist Church in South Los Angeles while the funeral director arranged flowers for Saturday morning services for 19-year-old Jonté Lee Reed.

Shirley Little, the pastor's wife, says the director called ministry friends for help when he saw the hearse was missing.

Little says family members driving to the funeral had been notified and stopped the hearse four blocks from the church.

KTLA-TV reports that police detained the man, whose mental condition will be evaluated.

Little says the hearse was returned and the funeral was only delayed by 30 minutes.

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Man, 23, bitten to death by his own father who thought he was possessed by a SNAKE

By Daily Mail Reporter

A 53-year-old man has been arrested on suspicion of biting his own son to death to get rid of 'a snake haunting him,' Japanese media have reported.

23-year-old Takuya Nagaya was attacked by his father, Katsumi Nagaya, on Friday in Okazaki City, Japan.

The investigation has so far revealed that the victim was repeatedly assaulted, included head-butting and biting.

When the father was arrested, reports suggest he confessed to Police that he committed the murder 'to drive the snake that had possessed him.'

According to television station TV Asahi, Mr Takuya, who lived in the nearby Anjo City, was at his parents' house late on Thursday night.

He allegedly began starting to behave in a violent and erratic manner, telling his parents he was a snake.

His worried mother called Takuya's father to help, and it was then that Katsumi began to beat his son, to rid him of the 'snake' that was taking over his mind.

This attack apparently continued on until the evening of Friday.

When Takuya's body had gone limp, he was rushed to the hospital, where he died later from his injuries.

No trial date set at the moment, but it seems likely the suspect's mental health will have to be examined before proceeding.

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Manchurian Miniature Water Buffalo

The Manchurian Miniature Water Buffalo is a dwarf species of buffalo that only stands a few inches tall, fully grown. It is recorded that Emperor Hi Lee Sung kept one in his garden for 47 years. More recently this species has been rumored to be extinct, though it is possible they are being secretly bred since Manchurian miniature water buffalo horns, which are highly prized, can still sometimes be found in Chinese markets throughout the world. These horns should not be confused with the flowering leaves of the Ling Jiao water chestnut, also sold in many Chinese markets, although the two are, in fact, identical. The sale of Manchurian miniature water buffalo horns in a Canadian store was reported by Maureen O'Dea in the *Victoria Star* in October 1988. Her report caused much outrage among animal-rights activists and launched an effort to ban the sale of its horns.

valuable concept. Given report caused a great deal indignation in the middle of animal-rights activist and launch an endeavor to ban the auction of its horns. Thanks!

Posted by Jessy Pole in Cheshire, CH1 SK10, UK on Mon Mar 28, 2011 at 06:12 AM

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Mannequin of Infamous Serial Killer Stolen and Dismembered

fox40.com

Posted 10:46 PM, December 20, 2014, by Nicole Comstock
SACRAMENTO-

A mannequin monument for convicted American serial killer Dorothea Puente met the same fate as some of her victims when it was stolen, and later found dismembered.

“Lots of people think it’s creepy that we live in this house. I don’t think it’s creepy. I think it’s interesting,” Tom Williams said.

Williams and his wife Barbara Holmes now live at the Victorian duplex on F Street in Sacramento where Puente allegedly buried 7 bodies of her 9 victims in the late 1980’s. Puente was later convicted of some of those murders and sentenced to life in prison, where she eventually died in 2011.

“She didn’t get the death penalty. My understanding is there was a juror that was unwilling to send this little old lady to death,” Williams said.

Puente notoriously walked away from the crime scene right in front of detectives as they dug up bones in her front yard. She was photographed leaving the home wearing a bright red coat.

William’s mannequin of Dorothea donned a replica of that coat and wielded a shovel. Before it was stolen, it was bolted to the front of the house.

“I went out looking and I could see the body parts…uh, the mannequins parts,” Williams said.

The thief was caught on surveillance camera struggling to remove the coat, but eventually ripping the mannequin off the wall and dragging the whole dummy downstairs. The mannequin was later found, missing the coat and wig, with dismembered arms.

The couple is confused as to how such a brazen crime occurred right under their noses. But then again, that has happened at the house before.

“You wonder how all these people in these houses couldn’t have seen anything. But who’s up at 3 AM? And we didn’t hear the mannequin being stolen, so.”

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Meet the Mudpeople

kcet.org

You may have seen them on the Venice Boardwalk, at the L.A. Convention Center or on the streets of Hollywood. They've also been known to frequent the banks of the L.A. River. They are the L.A. Mudpeople, a tribe of urban primitives who get naked, smear their bodies with mud, and walk -- slowly, deliberately -- around their surroundings.

"We're essentially living sculptures," explains Mike M. Mollett, who founded the troupe a quarter century ago, and still leads members on walkabouts and what he calls "non-performances."

Adds the 60-something Mollett: "We're an antidote to speed, stress, goals and time in this urbanizing society. As Mudpeople, we do not speak, so people must come up with their own answers as to who we are and why we're there, which may also put them in a position to wonder about themselves, and why they're moving so quickly."

Mike M. Mollett, 2013 | Photo: Ed Glendinning

And talk about multi-hyphenates: Mollett is a poet, sculptor, gardener, substitute teacher and performance artist, who first dabbled with mud in 1989, after being inspired by pictures of Colorado mudpeople. He booked himself and a few others at a now-defunct African-Reggae club as a one-off entertainment. The group donned plaster of Paris mud heads, slathered their nearly naked bodies with the stuff, and ambled, checking out their environment.

Mollett says he got hooked on the ritual, not to mention the liberating effects of near-nudity masked by mud, and became the de facto leader of the tribe.

"As a Mudperson," says Mollett, "you need to be able to just hang out, observe the environment and what's going on inside yourself. It's somewhat of a spiritual process, so you need to let go -- of goals, directions and of needs, I suppose."

The ranks of the L.A. Mudpeople have swelled upwards to 40 over the years, with the group having participated in more than 75 events, including the Doo Dah Parade and the World Festival of Sacred Music. They've journeyed to Joshua Tree National Monument and Santa Barbara and have been featured in Time Online, National Geographic Magazine and on various TV shows around the world, including Huell Howser's "Visiting." The troupe has also had exhibitions at UCLA and Cal State L.A featuring their artifacts, fetishes and other relics/garb.

mudpeopleriver

MUD PEOPLE explore the Los Angeles River from D. A. Metrov on Vimeo.

Last year D. A. Metrov filmed the "Mudpeople in the L.A. River," a regular haunt of theirs since 2004. As to their walkabouts, the group has explored Bunker Hill, Melrose Avenue and Old Town Pasadena. In one of the Mudpeople's earliest incarnations, actor Leonardo DiCaprio, then about 15, took to the streets of Venice in a handmade mud head.

"We get mud from Silver Lake, Hollywood, the Gold Rush part of the state," explains Mollett. "Then there's commercial mud -- from the art store, potter's clay. That's what we use the most. I also ask people who get around to bring me mud," adds Mollett, "but I love L.A. mud. It's a dark umber -- black, really -- and it's great."

For a voiceless Mudperson, Mollett is quite animated. "We evolved into silent, slow-moving, non-speaking deliberate people. Once you get that, there's nothing else you have to do or worry about."

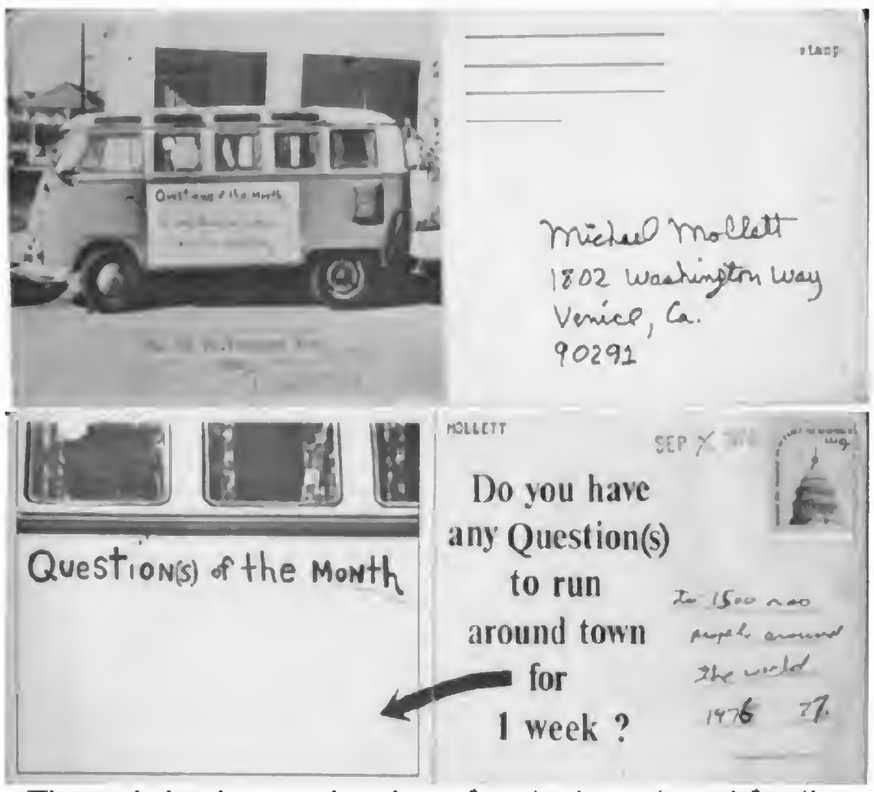
In addition to keeping the Mudpeople flame burning, Mollett, who has been a part of the Los Angeles art scene for some 40 years, regales with tales as a native son. Born in Pasadena, the man with boundless energy and elastic face, graduated from California Sate Polytechnic University with a degree in biology. This came in handy, he says, when he found a toad in his parents' swimming pool at their house in Covina in 1974.

"I saved it a few times," recalls Mollett, "and finally it died. I did a crucifixion on a street in the middle of Covina."

Two years later, Mollett cruised the streets in a '64 VW bus, or AAV -- Alternative Art Vehicle -- upon which he wrote a "Question-of-the-Month," pertaining, he says, to "society, culture and art.

"I sent out postcards to a literary and art mailing list of 1500 people from all over the world, asking for a question. Chris Burden, George Herms, Barbara T. Smith - they all sent cards back with their questions."

The 64 VW Bus at the ZERO ZERO Sept. 10 - Oct 2 1981 organized by Michael Mollett



The original oversized perforated postcard for the 64 VW Bus asking for a Question(s) of the Month/Week, 1976-77. This linked Mike M. Mollet to the Eternal (mail art) Network. | Photo: Mike M. Mollett

Musings ranged from, "Why circumcision?" to "What's the square root of existence?" Mollett would then paint the question on his bus before driving it around for a month. He would also photograph the bus, which eventually became a weekly drive-around objet d'art, turning that photo into an oversized postcard that he would keep sending out.

"That went on for seven years," recalls Mollett, "and that's what got me into mail art."

Indeed, from operating his AAV to creating postcards and rubber stamps, Mollett began making books. Judith Hoffberg, who died in 2009 and was a major influence in the emergence of books as an artist's medium, dubbed the bus a book.

"I did about 50 books. Of course, some were editions of one, and others only took a minute to make. I considered myself a xerographer," recalls Mollett, "an artist who used a photocopy machine. I would modify, stamp, punch holes, burn a bit of the book. I'd send those off to mail art shows."

Mollett forayed further into Dada. In 1980, with visual artists Patty Sue Jones and

sometimes Mudperson Neal (Skooter) Taylor, the trio created DADAFEST L.A. A six-week multi-venue series of Dada performances, it included four exhibitions, with a found object show at Otis and another in a mental institution, as well as a series of dinners and a parade.

Several years later, Taylor and Mollett formed ZTZU Gallery. The L.A. Weekly called it, "the ugliest gallery in Los Angeles."

Owned by the American Red Cross, the building was located in the MacArthur Park area, where the duo began offering themed group shows, such as "Love and Money" and "The Turkey Show." More than 100 artists participated, including poets, performance artists such as Johanna Went, and visual artists from Robt. Williams to Mark Gash.

But after eight months, Mollett and Taylor were asked to vacate the premises, which had been condemned, the finale featuring musicians, The Minutemen and Ulysses Jenkins. "We never tried to make any money, and most of the time it was free or

else it was 99 cents. It was for the pure joy of making art and involving people," says Mollett, wistfully.

In 1985, Mollett joined with three other colleagues to create The Lost Tribe: Actor/poet S. A. Griffin (his 2014 poetry collection, "Dreams Gone Mad With Hope," is published by Punk Hostage Press); monologist/poet Doug Knott, whose show, "The Last of the Knotts," has been a critical hit in recent years; and Michael Bruner, a Ph.D currently living in Atlanta.

The Tribe performed frequently at The Lhasa Club, a Hollywood venue owned by Jean-Pierre Boccara. Featuring underground, emerging and established artists, this hot spot also hosted rockers Henry Rollins, Excene, and the Red Hot Chili Peppers' Flea, among others, as well as performance art gurus, including John Fleck.

"I considered myself a punk poet," declares Mollett, "then the Lost Tribe started to become successful -- gigging in other clubs and at art events. Our highlight was winning on The Gong Show -- with the lowest score ever -- for our 'Slobs in Suits' routine. We wore suits, carried the Wall Street Journal and briefcases. It was very choreographed - with brooms, beer cans, partial animal masks. We were very physical."

And ahead of their time: The Lost Tribe ran for president, and also got married -- to each other -- in 1986. In a ceremony documented by the Weegee of Los Angeles, Gary Leonard, whose column "Take My Picture Gary Leonard," has been a Los Angeles fixture for decades, with a downtown gallery of the same name currently located on Broadway, the guys wore wedding dresses and offered guests cake and "money" sandwiches.

But as all good things must end -- or at least morph -- so, too, did The Lost Tribe evolve into The Carma Bums, a looser version of the Tribe plus the addition of the late Scott Wannberg. (A giant of the L.A. poetry scene, Wannberg, who worked the counter at Dutton's Brentwood bookstore for 25 years before it closed, died in 2011, with the Scott Wannberg Bookstore and

Poetry Lounge at Beyond Baroque having one of the largest collection of new and used poetry books in the city.)

After the Lhasa Club's Boccara closed shop in Hollywood and opened Luna Park, the Bums kicked off their 1996, "Twisted Tour of Words" at the West Hollywood nightclub. One of the group's biggest fans was actor Viggo Mortensen, who came to see the show and wished the Bums bon voyage before they toured the West Coast, the Southwest and Kansas City.

Mortensen, himself a poet and publisher, helped fund the Bums' documentary, "The Luxurious Tigers of Obnoxious Agreement," released in 1998. In an open letter describing the Bums, Mortensen wrote: "GENIUS. Threw away all plots, kept no records, gave themselves cancer, became one mouth, eating all of themselves, unedited, wanting no further circumcision (unlike so many of us, bravely throwing the printed word into disremembered vacuums) -- challenging spiritlessness every step of the broken way."

When the Bums broke up in 2009, the group had racked up hundreds of performances in settings ranging from art galleries, biker bars and libraries, to cabarets, coffee shops and even an old growth forest. A book of their poetry, "Twisted Cadillac - A Spoken Word Odyssey," was published by Sacred Beverage Press, with Beat poet/bookstore owner, Lawrence Ferlinghetti calling it, "A hot rod of a book."

The Bums are also represented in the seminal anthology, "The Outlaw Bible of American Poetry" (co-edited by Griffin), which can be found on Amazon, and Mollett and Bruner also contributed a hypertext poetic novella, "After the Break-In," to Evergreen Review.

Performing with both the Lost Tribe and The Carma Bums, Mollett made numerous solo appearances, as well. His recurring bits on the long-running cable access TV show, "The Looseleaf Report," included, "The Insensitive Naked Man/Gardener" and "Mike Mollett's Literary Minute." (AND Prior to doing "The Looseleaf Report -- my cable access show in the early to mid-80's -- the irrepressible performance artist also was a regular on another cutting-

edge cable TV show, "New Wave Theater," hosted by the late Peter Ivers.)

So how does someone like Mollett subsidize his art-making needs? He continues to work as a substitute teacher for preschool through sixth grade, where he often incorporates storytelling and his art into the classroom.

"I'm great with visual art, writing and language, and I can fly under the radar somewhat and still do the teaching with some of my own stuff."

Mollett still gigs around town, too: Last month he did a Cagean/Dada performance at Beyond Baroque (other L.A. figures included poets Linda J. Albertano and Laurel Ann Bogen, also performed), where he sat, in silence, pulling out a few pens, pencils and a notebook. Part of the official West Coast launch of "Maintenant 8: Journal of Contemporary Dada Writing and Art," published by Three Rooms Press (Mollett has a piece of artwork in the current issue), the event was co-hosted by the press's co-directors, New York-based performance artists Peter Carlaftes and Kat Georges.

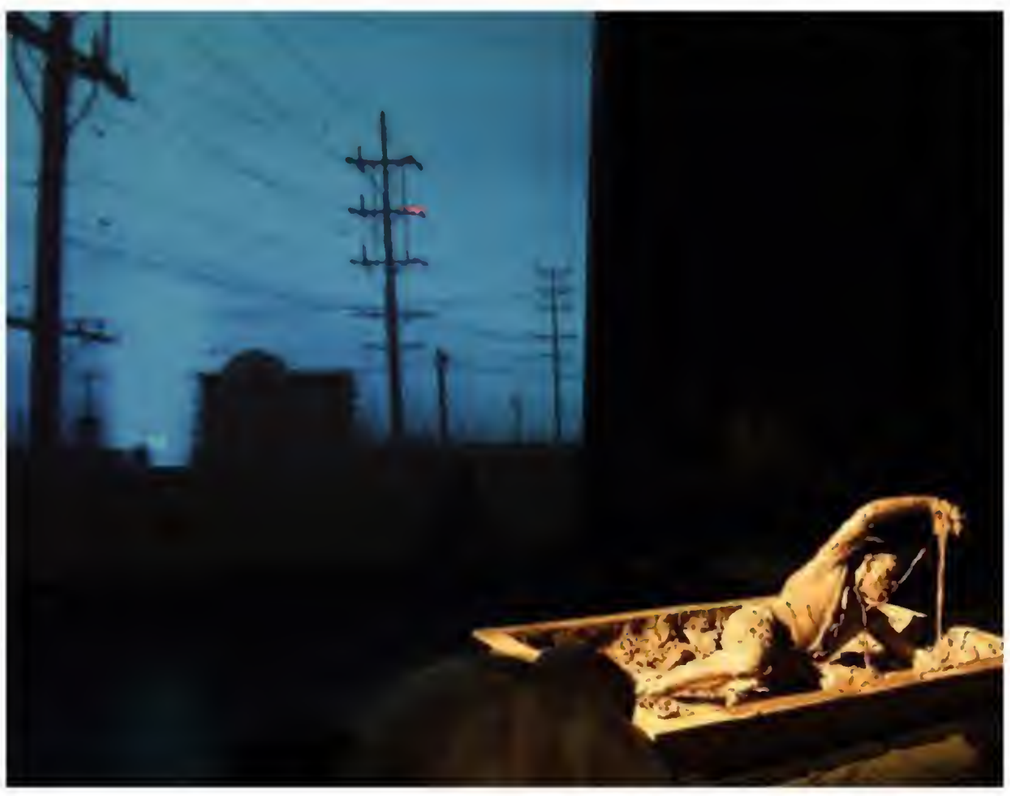
And Mollett's sculptures have recently been garnering attention: Balls and bundles made from found art and that are derived from his work as a gardener, landscape artist and Mudperson, they range in size from six inches by one-inch up to 18-1/2 feet high and weighing 350

pounds. The balls can be as small as a golf ball or measure six feet in diameter.

The art, which he has been making since 1999, is instantly identifiable, and has been seen in a number of exhibitions, including at Highways Performance Gallery (2010), and a pop-up art space in Eagle Rock, PlayLand (2010), which also featured a Mudcave. (In 2009, Mollett also created The Mud Room at the El Cortez Hotel in Reno, Nevada, as part of the NadaDada Festival with several Mudfolks donning mud heads and accouterments for the better part of a week.)

Last year, Highland Park's Matters of Space featured Mollett's work in a solo exhibition, while group shows have included L.A. Municipal Art Gallery and L.A. Art Association's Gallery 825. Currently, Mollett has three works, including a mud head and a sculpture made from materials found in the L.A. River, in a show of L.A. artists, "Los Angeles Contraventions," featured at the Gallerie Merkel in Wyhlen, Germany.

"I've always been interested in process, found objects, aging, patina - how things that are just out there change," explains Mollett. "The idea of collecting materials -- I call my bundles time/twists -- they're like time capsules or materials from our lives that have something to say about us, our culture, our society -- where we live, how we live."



Top Image: Gif from "MUD PEOPLE explore the Los Angeles River."

prevnext

Mictlantecuhtli

c. 1345 CE - 1521 CE

ancient.eu

by Mark Cartwright published on 22 September 2013

Mictlantecuhtli (Dennis Jarvis)

Mictlantecuhtli (*pron.* Mict-lan-te-cuht-li) or 'Lord of the Land of the Dead' was the Aztec god of death and worshipped across Mesoamerica. He ruled the underworld (Mictlán) with his wife Mictecacíhuatl. The god was the ruler of the 10th day Itzcuintli (Dog), the 5th Lord of the Night and the 6th (or 11th) Lord of the Day. He was the equivalent of the Maya god Yum Cimil, the Zapotec god Kedo and the Tarascan god Tihuime. Mictlantecuhtli was closely associated with owls, spiders and bats and the direction south.

The Creation Myth

In the Aztec creation myth Mictlantecuhtli attempted to delay the god Ehecatl-Quetzalcóatl on his journey into Mictlán. Quetzalcoatl was searching for the bones of the creatures from the previous world of the 4th Sun in order to make mankind. Amongst the tricks and difficult tasks Mictlantecuhtli set was to insist that Quetzalcoatl could only take the bones away with him if he went around the underworld four times blowing a conch-shell trumpet. This task was not quite as simple as it seemed as the god of the underworld only gave Quetzalcoatl an ordinary conch-shell and so it would not sound. Quetzalcoatl got around the problem by having worms drill holes in the shell and placing bees inside it so that their buzzing would sound like a trumpet. Not to be outdone by this, Mictlantecuhtli let Quetzalcoatl think that he had got the better of things and allowed him to take the bones.

Mictlantecuhtli was such an important god in the Aztec pantheon because, as ruler of Mictlán, all souls would one day meet him face to face.

Mictlantecuhtli, then, far from giving up, arranged for his assistants, the Micteca, to dig a large pit so that Quetzalcoatl would stumble into it when he tried to leave Mictlán. Sure enough, when passing the pit and, unluckily startled by a passing quail, Quetzalcoatl fell into the trap and the bones became broken and scattered. However, Quetzalcoatl roused himself and gathering up the bones managed to extract himself from the pit and get away unscathed from the clutches of Mictlantecuhtli. Once safely delivered to the goddess Cihuacóatl, the bones were mixed with Quetzalcoatl's blood and from the mixture sprang forth the first men and women.

Mictlàn

Mictlantecuhtli was such an important god in the Aztec pantheon because, as ruler of Mictlán, all souls would one day meet him face to face, for it was believed that only those who suffered a violent death, women who died in childbirth or people killed by storms or floods

avoided the underworld in the afterlife. The Aztecs did not believe in a special paradise reserved only for the righteous but, rather, that all people shared the same destiny after death, regardless of the kind of life they had led. Souls would descend the nine layers of the underworld in an arduous four-year journey until eventually reaching extinction in the deepest part - Mictlan Opochcalocan. Mictlantecuhtli was particularly worshipped in the Aztec month of Tititl where, at the temple of Tlalxicco, an impersonator of the god was sacrificed and incense was burned in his honour.

Representation in Art

Mictlantecuhtli is usually portrayed in art as a skeleton or covered in bones with red spots representing blood. He may also wear a skull mask, bone ear plugs, a costume of owl feathers and even a necklace of eyeballs. He has curly black hair and powerful eyes which allow him to penetrate the gloom of the underworld. On occasion he can be wearing clothes and a conical hat made from bark-paper.

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Millersville Police: Men stopped with dead fetus in car had permit

Jordan Buie , jbuie@tennessean.com

tennessean.com

Updated 10:26 p.m. CST

Millersville Police: Men stopped with dead fetus in car had permit

The Millersville Police chief said three Muslim men who transported a dead fetus in their car and were briefly stopped Wednesday on an unrelated registration issue, had legitimate documentation with them.

Millersville Police Chief David Hindman said the men were transporting the 15-week-old fetus, whose mother had a miscarriage at a Bowling Green, Ky., hospital..

"The men had a coroner's provisional death certificate with them, a burial transit permit," Hindman said. "The mother sadly had a miscarriage and lost her baby. The father, according to the custom of their religion, decided to bury their child theirself."

Hindman said Thursday one of the men attempted to show the deputy the provisional death report, but there was a language barrier between the deputy and the men in the car. The driver was the father of the fetus.

Hindman said after learning of the coroner's report, Millersville police did not seek out the men or the car and decided to let them mourn in peace.

Initially, police were looking for the three men when there was confusion as to whether a crime had been committed.

Hindman said the deputy requested identification from the three men, all of whom had Saudi driver's licenses and passports. Hindman said one man in the car told the deputy all three men were Muslim and were burying one of the men's dead child. They declined to show the deputy the body, saying that, according to their religion, they did not have to show the body.

The chief said the men told the deputy they were transporting the child to a mosque to be buried in Franklin.

"Not wanting to interfere with the Muslim faith and not wanting to cause an incident, (the deputy) decided to go ahead and let the men bury the child," Hindman said Wednesday night.

The chief said that the deputy returned to the police station and reported what happened. The chief then immediately sent out an alert to local law enforcement agencies because the men had already left his jurisdiction.

He said his staff also contacted mosques in the area to verify that a family was coming to bury the child.

"This case is one in a million," the chief said. "We are going to have some additional training for the deputy and there are going to be some new policies instated to make sure supervisors are aware of what is going on on the road when deputies are out patroling."

Reporters Holly Meyer, Stacey Barchenger and Nicole Young contributed to this report.

- Dec. 12, 2014, 7:40 p.m.

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Monkey 'witch' burnt by mob

30/05/2011 timeslive.co.za

A Vervet monkey was burnt to death in Kagiso informal settlement, west of Johannesburg, after residents believed it was linked to witchcraft.

"In an incident described as 'barbaric' by the Community-led Animal Welfare (Claw), residents chanted 'kill that witch!'," The Star newspaper reported on Monday.

It reported that the monkey wandered into the settlement last week Monday, May 23, and was pelted with stones, shot at by police, and then burnt to death.

The monkey fled the mob and temporarily found shelter in a tree, but was pulled out, put in a bucket and doused in petrol.

"Someone struck a match. (The monkey) got out of the bucket and dropped down dead. They continued throwing stones at it," Kagiso resident, Tebogo Moswetsi was reported as saying.

Moswetsi was woken up by friends on Monday morning and told about the monkey. They said it was going around Kagiso "talking to people".

He said he joined in the case as he was curious. He was the resident that climbed the tree and brought the monkey down.

"I feel guilty, I shouldn't have taken it down from that tree. I dropped it down after someone poured petrol on it. I had no choice," Moswetsi said.

Claw manager, Cora Bailey, arrived at the scene and said she was devastated.

"I felt devastated. You could barely tell it had been a living creature. There were very small children who looked very confused and frightened."

Bailey explained animals fell victim to superstition, especially because they did not understand that such animals wander into townships because their natural habitat was destroyed or it was separated from its troop.

"It was a quest to find a family," she said.

Johannes Bapela, also a Kagiso resident, called Bailey after calls to police failed to deliver results, he told The Star.

"They beat it up, then set it alight. I couldn't sleep that night because it was too traumatic," he said.

He called the claims of witchcraft "totally baseless" and added it was more mob mentality than anything else.

Warrant Officer Solomon Sibiya could not confirm that police shot at the animal, the newspaper reported.

"I enquired, but I don't think it's something that was reported," Sibiya was quoted as saying.

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Monstro Bizarro: Shunka Warak'in

It's not often that there's a mounted taxidermy example of an alleged cryptozoological beast, but in the case of the mysterious Shunka Warak'in, this might be a real possibility!

The name for this legendary creepy canid was provided by the Ioway Indians, roughly translated as "carrying off dogs." It is said to be a four-legged animal similar to a wolf or hyena which lives (or lived) in the midwestern United States, most notably in the Montana region. Little is known about Shunka, but according to the native peoples of the area, he was indeed a real animal.

art_Shunka

(Shunka Warak'in by Eerie Eric)

The first modern report of a creature fitting this description dates back to the 1880's when Israel Hutchins and his family first settled in the Madison River Valley of Montana. The Hutchins family became a prominent part of the Montana landscape after establishing a large ranch near the town of Ennis. Israel's grandson, zoologist Ross Hutchins, would later describe the possible encounter with Shunka Warak'in in his book Trails to Nature's Mysteries: The Life of a Working Naturalist published in 1977. He writes:

> "One winter morning my grandfather was aroused by the barking of the dogs. He discovered that a wolflike beast of dark color was chasing my grandmother's geese. He fired his gun at the animal but missed. It ran off down the river, but several mornings later it was seen again at about dawn."

The beast was also seen by others as it prowled around the homes and ranches of the area. Hutchins recorded the description as follows:

> "Those who got a good look at the beast describe it as being nearly black and having high shoulders and a back that sloped downward like a hyena."

The mysterious creature eluded the trigger-happy pioneers for awhile, but finally its luck ran out.

> "Then one morning in late January, my grandfather was alerted by the dogs, and this time he was able to kill it. Just what the animal was is still an open question. After being killed, it was donated to a man named [Joseph] Sherwood who kept a combination grocery and museum at Henry Lake in Idaho. It was mounted and

displayed there for many years. He called it *ringdocus*."

As in many cases of strange animals loose in the countryside, it was initially proposed to be an escaped circus animal. It was Ross Hutchins, who incidentally has a Ph.D. in zoology, that put forth the circus animal theory. However, there was no circus for hundreds of miles around the small Montana settlement, so this seems rather unlikely.

shunkawarakin1

Original Photo of The Beast (Hutchins)

Although the taxidermy specimen had been long lost by the time Hutchins published his book, he did have an authentic photo of the mounted "ringdocus" which he included. The creature in the photo seemed to fit the description of the Ioway Indian's legendary Shunka Warak'in, but were they one and the same? The creature appeared to be a unique animal that is neither dire wolf nor hyena, and is very unlikely to be any kind of dog hybrid. The closest animal that lived in the area, which might account for an unknown species, was the *Borophagus*. The Borophagus was a type of hyena-like dog typically found in North America. The only problem with that explanation is that the Borophagus existed during the Pleistocene era which dates back millions of years ago! Could some descendants have survived? There is no way to know without having the actual taxidermy creature.

But alas… something that rarely happens in dubious cases like this, actually happened. The taxidermy specimen was found! After reading a story about it in 2007, another grandson of Israel Hutchins, Jack Kirby, managed to track down the exhibit to the Idaho Museum of Natural History in Pocatello where it had been on display unbeknownst to everyone in the cryptzoo community. Taking the specimen on loan, Kirby reported measurements of 48 inches from snout to rear (not including the tail) and 28 inches high at the shoulder. It is nearly black in color, just as Hutchins had originally described. Even stranger, the thing has faint impressions of stripes on its flanks making it a true mystery.

shunkawarakin2

New Photo of The Beast (Kirby)

It's not easy to identify the creature as any known dog, wolf or hyena… so what exactly is it? Is it a poorly mounted black wolf? Is it the same beast the natives call Shunka Warak'in? DNA analysis could potentially reveal the secrets, however, DNA tests ain't cheap. So for now, we'll just have to keep wondering and hoping that finally one of crytozoology's strangest cases may turn out to be a real monster! Er, well at least a new kind of creepy dog. So until then, perhaps he could work his way into a made-for-tv movie on the SyFy channel – albeit he would need a little pumping up for effect – or perhaps lend his name to a new dance craze. Come on everybody, do the Shunka Warak'in!

In the mountains of the Southern Appalachians, from North Carolina down through Georgia and Alabama, the remains of ancient stone structures line the ridges. Some of these are additions to natural rock formations, others are entirely man-made. Who built these structures? Are they the remains of an ancient war fought in the Appalachians? Are they all that's left of the Moon-Eyed People?

The Moon-Eyed People are a race of small men who, according to Cherokee legend, once lived in the Southern Appalachians. The Moon-Eyed People were said to being physically very different from the Cherokee, being bearded and having pale, perfectly white skin. They were called Moon-Eyed because they were unable to see in daylight, their sensitive eyes being blinded by the sun. For this reason, they were strictly nocturnal, and lived in underground caverns.

Perhaps the most famous structure associated with The Moon-Eyed People is just over the North Carolina border in Georgia at Fort Mountain. Now a state park, Fort Mountain gets its name form the 850 foot long stone wall that varies in height from two to six feet and stretches along the top of the ridge. This stone wall is though to have been constructed around 400 - 500 C.E.

According to one Cherokee legend, this wall is a remnant of a war that the Moon-Eyed people fought and lost against the neighboring Creek nation. The Creeks drove the Moon-Eyed People from their homeland during a full moon, which even the pale light of is blinding to these nocturnal people.

Another version of the story has is that it was the Cherokee themselves who waged war against the Moon-Eyed People, driving them from their home at Hiwassee, a village near what is now Murphy, North Carolina, west into Tennessee. Both versions of the story say the Moon-Eyed People began living underground after losing the war.

Cherokee cosmology is complex and fascinating, and describes a universe where humans share the world with other, non-human, supernatural peoples. In the traditional Cherokee concept of the world, races such as the Nunnehi or the Yunwi Tsudi are a part of the natural world who interact with humans at their own discretion, similar to the traditional idea of fairies in the British Isles. However, what's interesting is that The Moon-Eyed People are never described as being supernatural, but are remembered as another group of humans who were physically very different than the Native Americans.

Because the description of the Moon-Eyed People is that they are pale-skinned and bearded, this has led to some amount of speculation, quite a bit of it wild, that the legend of the Moon-Eyed People represents a Cherokee folk memory of contact with a group of European settlers who made it to the new world before Columbus. Particularly, the Cherokee legend of the Moon-Eyed People has been matched up with the Welsh legend of Prince Madoc.

Acording to the Welsh story, Madoc ab Owain Gwynedd was a Welsh prince who, disenchanted with the civil war wracking his homeland, set sail with his brother Rhirid and a few followers in 1170 across the Atlantic Ocean and landed somewhere around Mobile Bay, Alabama. After some exploring up and down the rivers of southern America, Madoc decided he liked the place well enough and decided to move in. Leaving Rhirid and some of his fellow Welshmen behind, Madoc returned to his native country and recruited enough followers to fill ten ships. He and his colonists set sail back to America and was never heard from in Wales again. Some have speculated that the Moon-Eyed People are the descendants of Madoc's colonists, and that it was these Welshman who fought a war with the Cherokee, and these Welshmen who built the stone forts that dot the ridges of the mountains.

Driven out by the Cherokee, Madoc's descendants found their way South to Florida and Alabama, where they continued to live in, slowly absorbing bits of Native American culture, until they became a strange tribe of pale Indians, living and dressing in Native ways but speaking Welsh.

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Sex romp in the most unlikely of places

13/12/2014 news.com.au

Young thrillseeking couple on sex romp in Moscow metro

- by: AFP
- 3 days ago December 13, 2014 3:06PM

MOSCOW'S ageing Soviet metro system became the unlikely scene for sexual antics this week as a thrillseeking young couple crept into a tunnel and made love on the tracks.

The metro ordered an urgent security sweep on Friday after what appeared to be the first such incident in the subway famed for its ornate stations hung with chandeliers.

Moscow has a subculture of enthusiasts who explore its maze of tunnels including the metro system, called "diggers", and a young couple this week published photos of themselves romping naked on the rails.

Their feat came to light only after the couple posted their photographs on social networking sites, prompting questions about the ageing metro's security.

"This is the first time we have seen something like this. We don't have experience of this sort of thing," a metro spokesman told AFP.

'Breach of security'

The metro management announced spot checks of the security on the whole system to see if it was possible to gain illegal access to the underground zones, the spokesman said.

"In particular, all the ventilation shafts will be checked to see if they can be used to access the underground system," he added.

It appeared to be the first such rendezvous to come to light in the history of the 79-year-old system, which is used by some eight million people every day as the best way to beat the jams.

The couple picked a service tunnel that is only used to divert trains in an emergency, not one along which metro trains rumble up to every 90 seconds at peak times, the metro spokesman added.

"If such an incident had taken place on a constantly operating stretch of track, the wrongdoers would have been discovered and caught immediately, as soon as they entered the tunnel." Any breach of security is alarming for the metro given that it experienced suicide bombings with multiple casualties in 2010 and 2004.

A member of the public chamber which advises the Kremlin even called for the metro security

chief to be sacked.

"It's a good job these young people were just having fun and not plotting anything bad," Dmitry Chugunov, head of the chamber's public safety commission, told pro-Kremlin Izvestia daily.

"Now what's needed is to look not for them, but the holes they used to get onto the tracks." Police said on Thursday that they were carrying out a check into the incident and trying to establish the identity of the couple.

'We are not the first'

The male digger, who only gave his name as Andrei R., told *Life News* website that on Tuesday he and his girlfriend entered a service tunnel on the green metro line, which runs close to the Kremlin.

"We were definitely not the first," he said.

The man was identified by REN TV as an internet user with the nickname Andrey Rayonny, who regularly posts pictures on Instagram.

He is part of the "digger" movement, in which urban explorers descend into tunnels built under Moscow, including secret Soviet-era installations.

The authorities are largely powerless to stop them as there are believed to be many illicit ways to get in.

The Moscow metro is also the setting for another risk-taking trend in which young Russians attempt to ride between carriages or on their roofs as they travel between stations.

These extreme thrillseekers called "train surfers" are taking a huge risk. Last year, a young man was crushed between carriages on the busy circle line, while in 2011 two students died while riding on the roof of a metro carriage.

"The problem is not the metro, the problem is people," said the metro spokesman said.

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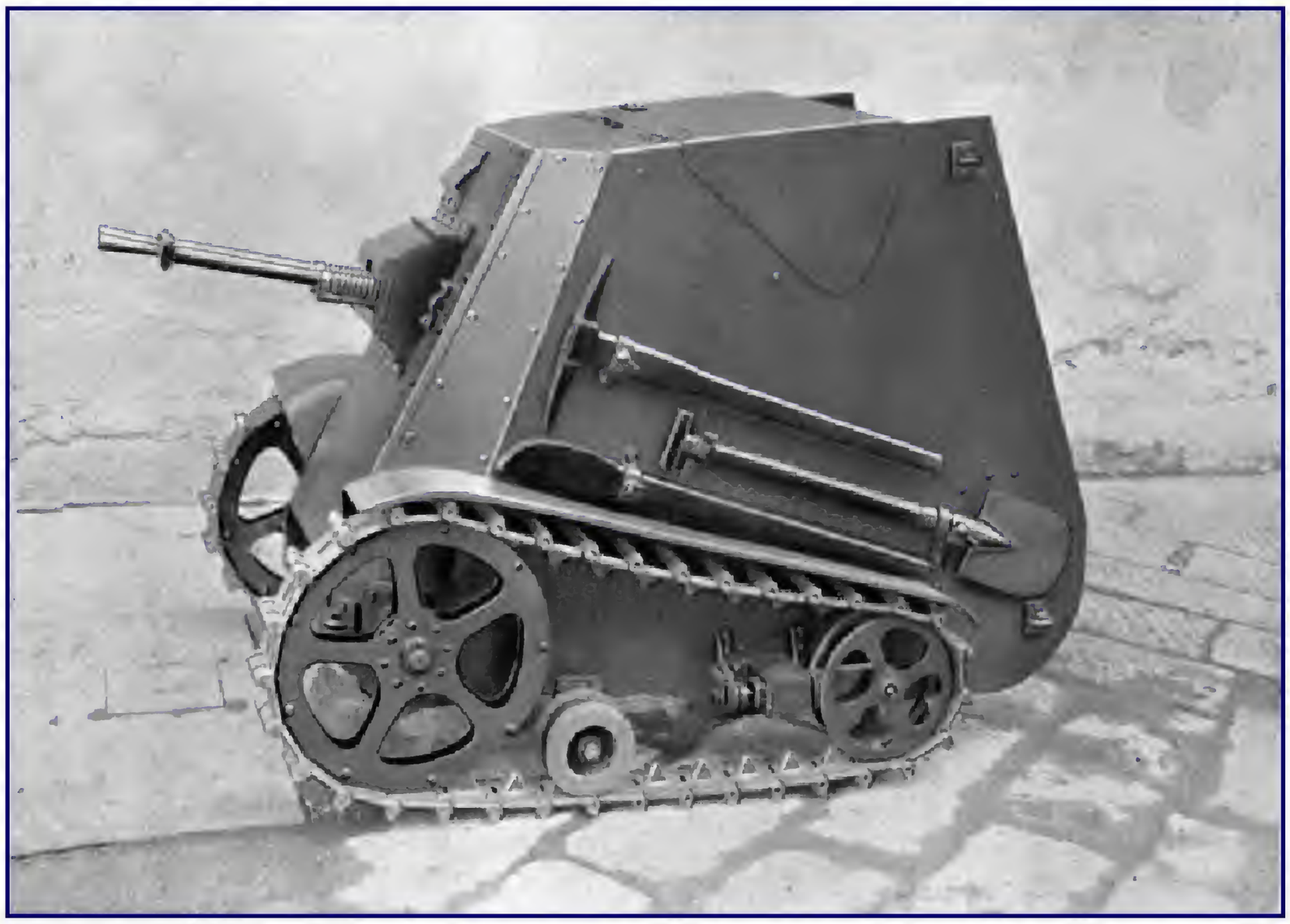

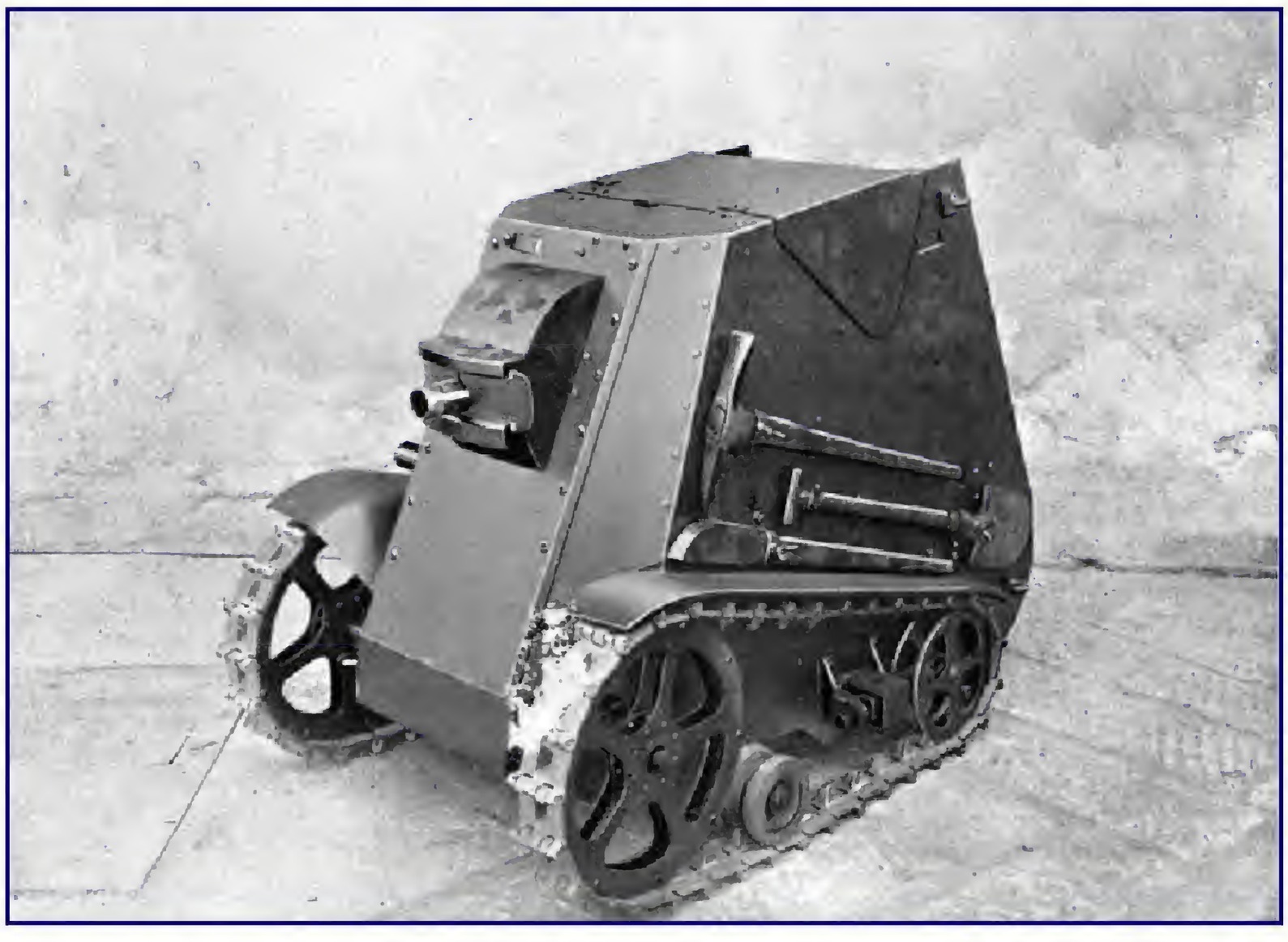

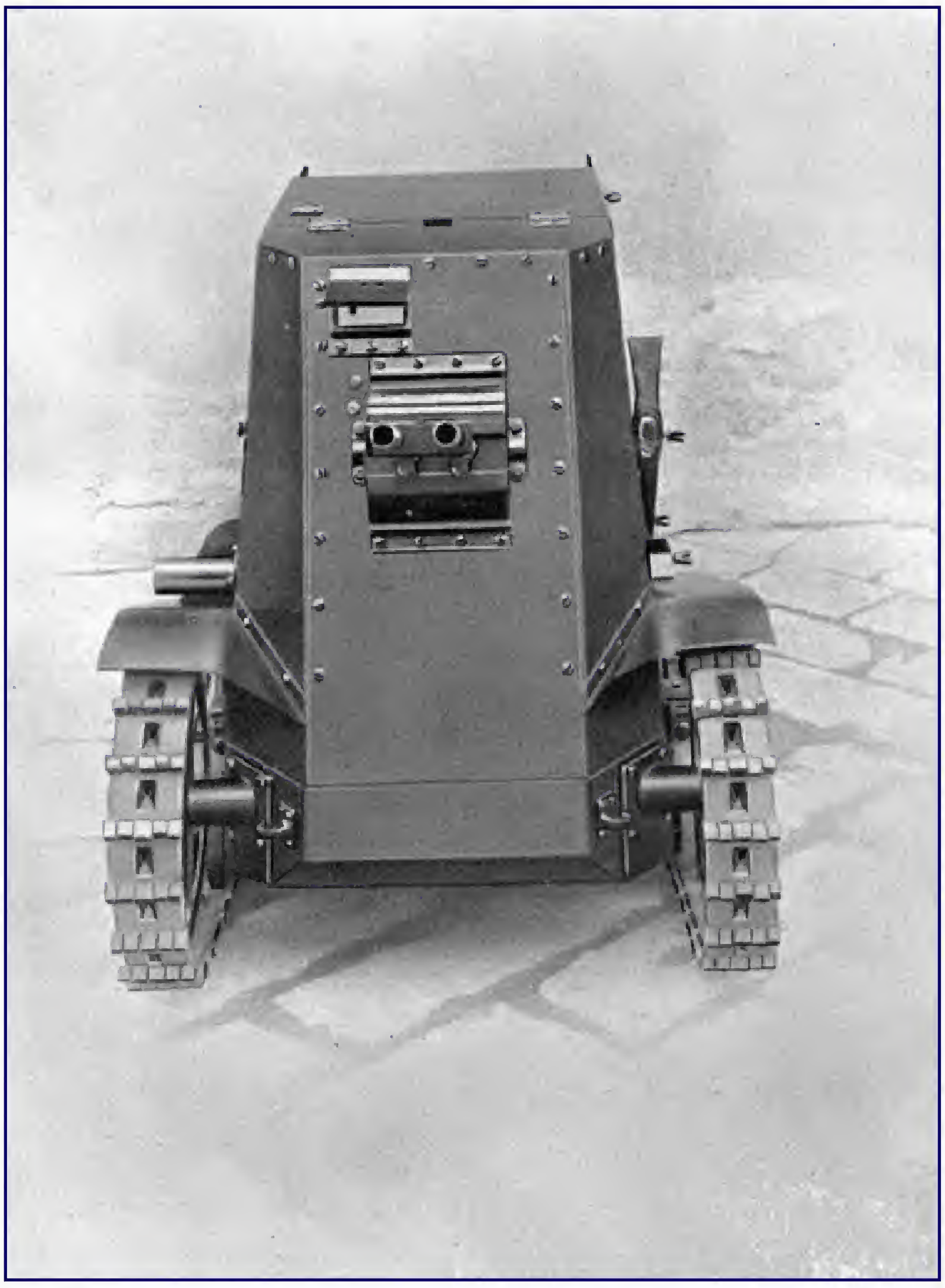

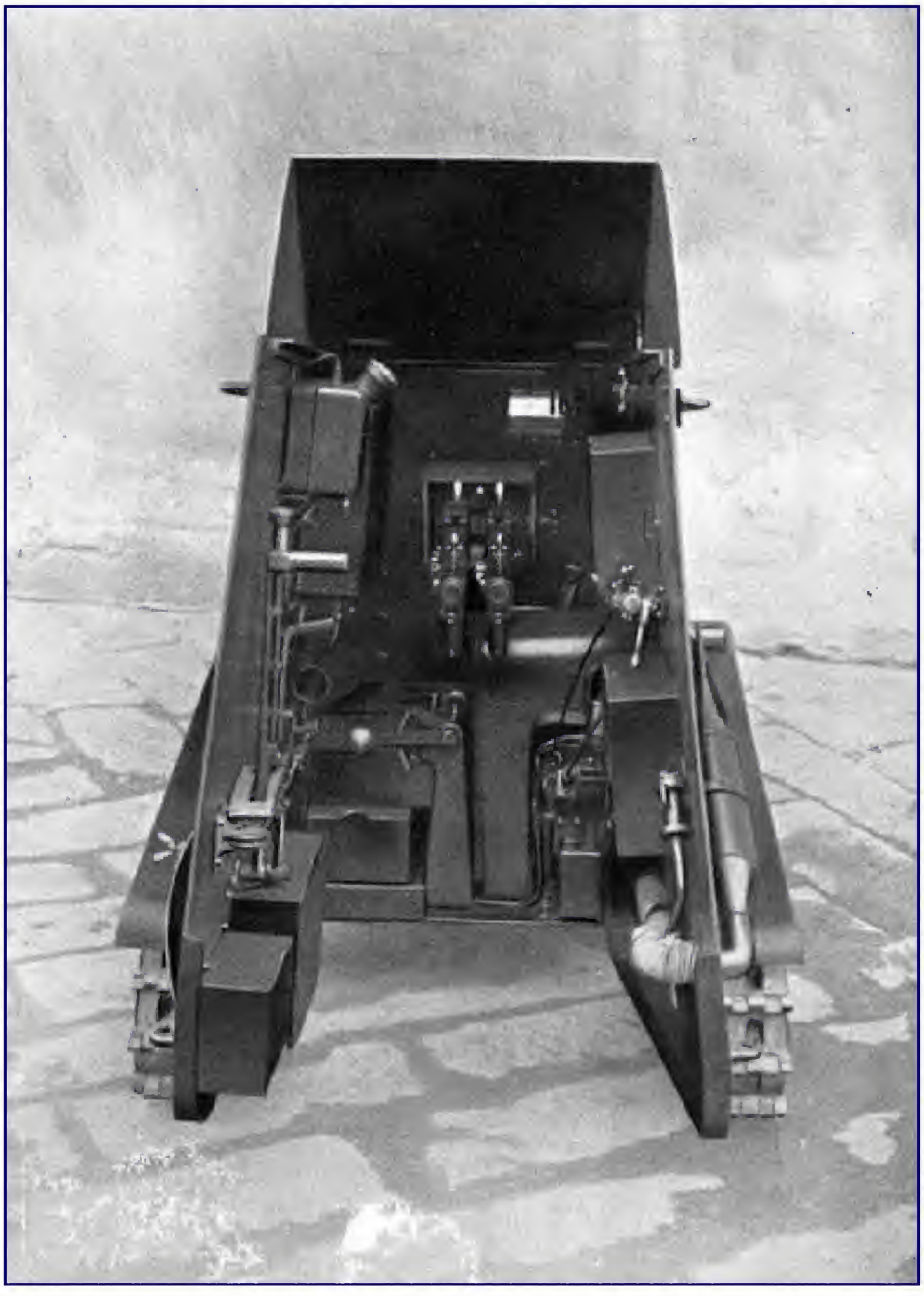

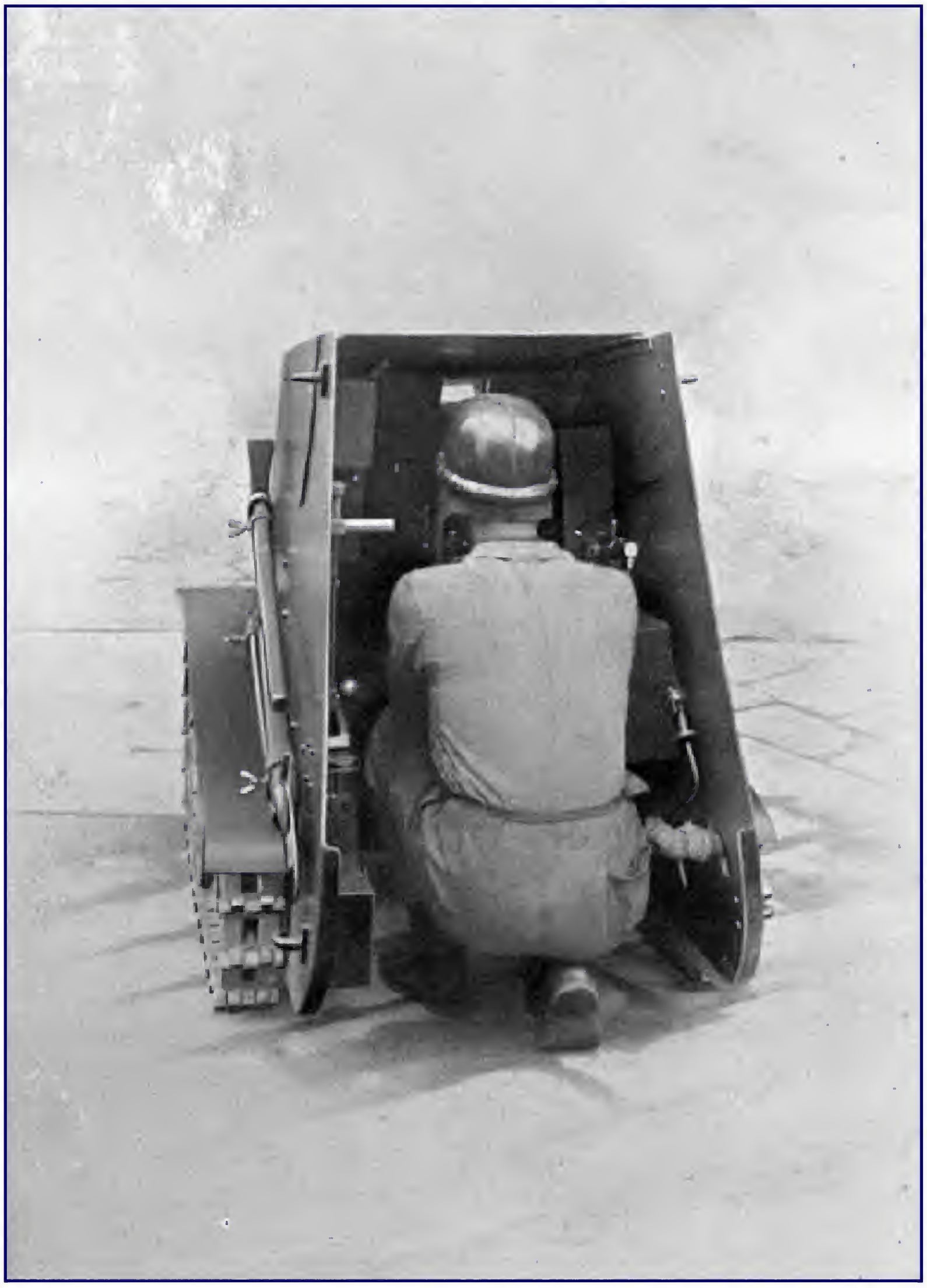

shitkicker-deluxe:

ratak-monodosico:

The Motomitragliatrice Blindata d'Assalto "Mias„ .

A curious piece of Italian engineering, the "Motomitragliatrice blindata d'assalto" ("Motorised Armoured Assault Machine Gun") was apparently

designed in 1935 by the Ansaldo company, a national producer of equipment and guns for the Italian Royal Army.

Weighing a total of 470 Kg, its armour could protect the operator against all small arms' fire, including 7.92mm Mauser (if shot from a distance greater than 50 metres). A tiny Frera 250 cc engine was to provide traction with a top speed of 4.9 Km/H, and a virtual autonomy of 100 Km.

The "Mias" could be fitted with either 2 twin-mounted Scotti 6.5mm Machine Guns or a Brixia 45mm Cannon.

The project never got past the prototype stage.

…Can't imagine why this never caught on…

It's one of those things only the WWII era Italian Army could come up with.

Mud People

July 06, 1996

latimes.com

They are six people making their livings as a schoolteacher/poet, a freelance journalist, an office manager, a masseuse and in other familiar jobs. They are also the Los Angeles Mudpeople, a self-named "urban tribe" that eschews spoken language and most clothing for its walkabouts in local parks, in parades and at other public spots. They got together about eight years ago, inspired by a similar group in Colorado.

Their aim, they say, is to challenge onlookers with a "culture out of context," but they deny that what they do is performance art. It is also not an anthropological display, though the links to certain New Guinea tribes are unmistakable.

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EsoterX

~ If Monsters Don't Exist, Why Are They Out To Get Me?

EsoterX

Pythagorean enforcers…they're not just crazy, they're irrational.

Some folks say all murder is irrational, and there may be some truth to this, as 5th Century Pythagorean cultist Hippasus of Metapontum, the man credited with the discovery of irrationality, mathematically speaking, is rumored to have been murdered for the crime of divulging the existence of irrational numbers.

Maybe like the rest of us, you fell asleep in math class that day, but irrational numbers are, well, a bit weird. You see, the universe is built on what they call "natural numbers". Natural numbers are super useful for stuff like counting and ordering things, additionally interesting because they can be used to generate the subset of "real numbers", that is, a value you can place on a continuous and infinitely long number line, like "3" or "Pi". The real numbers include all the "rational numbers", or any number that can be expressed as the quotient of two integers (and that doesn't result in a decimal portion that is non-repeating into infinity i.e. ½ or 5.66666….Then you have the other subset of the real numbers called the "irrational numbers". Irrational numbers can't be represented as a simple fraction since they neither terminate nor repeat, such as the ratio of a circle's circumference to its diameter, Euler's Number, the Golden Ratio, or $\sqrt{2}$. This is widely regarded as awfully inconsiderate of them, which is why we have largely ignored them for most of human history.

Mathematicians in 7th Century B.C. India may have been toying with the idea that irrational numbers existed, but the Indian early medieval age was largely characterized by regional warlords clobbering each other over the head, so employment of Indian mathematicians outside of the defense contracting industry was relatively limited. On the other hand, Ancient Greece concurrently came up with the notions of philosophy, disposable income, and the sabbatical, freeing up the average Greek mathematician to turn his attention to imponderables and proofs of existence. Not that they did. They wanted to build cool stuff like the Acropolis. Before Plato and Aristotle became philosophical superstars, 6th Century B.C. philosopher, mathematician, and mystic Pythagoras of Samos was diligently figuring out that

mathematics were the key to the universe.

We don't know that much about Pythagoras himself, and most of what we do know was written down by his followers or biographers several hundred years after he died. He could have been a loon, but one thing's for sure – dude knew his hypotenuse. Pythagoras thought numbers were so awesome that he founded a religious sect based on the notion that numbers constitute the true nature of things, and propounded an entire cosmology that centered on ideas of numerical harmony. Not too shabby for the guy who's theorem you had to prove a few hundred times in high school geometry. The bottom line is that subsequent generations of Pythagoreans took their numbers seriously. Pythagoras was also busy preaching vegetarianism and temperance, which were wildly unpopular with Greeks at the time, and eventually Pythagoras and his followers were persecuted, killed, or driven out of Greece. Pythagoras wound up starving himself to death in Metapontum, Italy, but his followers carried on his traditions for a few more centuries. About a hundred years later, the Pythagoreans were busy maintaining the traditions, and attracted the attention of a young gentleman named Hippasus. Now, up until this time, Pythagoreans were busy telling the initiated that all numbers could be expressed as the ratio of integers. It made for a nice, orderly, comprehensible universe. Along comes Hippasus, party animal that he was, and in trying to inscribe a regular dodecahedron inside a sphere, happened across the existence of irrational numbers. The discovery of irrationality was so staggering, that no doubt Hippasus felt he had to tell somebody. Which he did. And this got him killed. Little did we know that mathematics, like the Sicilian Mafia has its own *omertà* ("code of silence"), the violation of which seems to literally result in one's "sleeping with the fishes".

As is usually the case with mathematical mafia hits, no corpse was ever found, hence rumors abounded about why and how Hippasus was bumped off, much like Jimmy Hoffa. 3rd Century A.D. Syrian Neoplatonist philosopher Iamblichus noted the confusion over the exact circumstances under which Hippasus was silenced. "Hippasus, one of the Pythagoreans, is said to have divulged the theory of commensurable and incommensurable quantities to those unworthy to receive them, or for having revealed the method of inscribing in a sphere the dodecahedron, one of the five solid figures, and claiming the credit for this discovery for himself so that the other disciples not only expelled him from their common association, but built a tomb as for one who had passed from the human into another life, or another account is that the Divine Powers were so indignant that he perished in the sea" (Iamblichus, 1905, p31-32). Of course, the perpetrators were all too happy to credit the grisly end of Hippasus as shark bait to Poseidon, since the pantheon of gods was largely outside the legal jurisdiction of the authorities, thereby stonewalling any serious investigation. Some say that the story of Hippasus' drowning was just a cover-up to throw the cops off the trail, and that he was quietly murdered elsewhere.

Now what was all the fuss about? The Pythagorean religion was founded on the notion that numbers were everything, the alpha and omega of perfection and order. Throw in some irrational numbers that make it technically impossible to precisely solve a beautiful little equation like a2+b2=c2 to find the length of the hypotenuse (a triangle with two sides 1 unit long each, result in an irrational hypotenuse of $\sqrt{2}$) and obviously it's a short distance to fire and brimstone falling from the sky, rivers and seas boiling, earthquakes, volcanos, the dead

rising from the grave, human sacrifice, and cats and dogs living together. Hippasus had to go, and the Pythagoreans engineered a plausible "accident" to ensure they could keep the existence of irrational numbers under wraps for at least a little while longer. Perhaps you are considering a lucrative career in mathematics, and far be it from me to discourage you as the world could do with a few more mathematicians, but be aware of the practical dangers, the politics, the conspiracies, and the inquisitions. You put your life on the line with every proof. They might name a theorem after you and you will be remembered by future generations, but take note that Pythagoras himself sagely observed, "Reason is immortal, all else mortal". Kind of sounds like a threat, doesn't it?

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Blog at WordPress.com . The Chateau Theme .

Mysterious ice pancakes appear on Scottish river

wtkr.com

Posted 4:55 pm, December 18, 2014, by Doris TaylorUpdated at 05:16pm, December 18, 2014

Photo Gallery

LONDON (CNN) — Here's another Scottish mystery to file alongside the Loch Ness Monster and Mel Gibson's accent in "Braveheart."

Ice pancakes.

These strange frozen saucers were found during a recent cold snap near the River Dee — a salmon-filled waterway that passes by the British Queen's summer residence, Balmoral Castle, before heading eastwards to the coastal city of Aberdeen.

River Dee Trust biologist Jamie Urquhart made the discovery and took the photos at Lummels Pool, Birse — several miles downstream of Balmoral.

The trust said it was initially unsure what caused the pancakes, but supects they're caused by a rare phenomenon in which foam freezes in a swirling eddy.

Rare occurrence

"Perhaps each disc grew when smaller pieces of unfrozen foam struck the disc, adhered and then froze in place," it wrote on its website.

"The raised rims are undoubtedly due to the collisions but what about the inner lines?

"The air temperature was colder at night due to the clear-sky conditions but warmer in the day, meaning the discs may have grown at night, then during the day, when the discs softened in the sun, further collisions between the 'pancakes' caused the rims to be pushed up.

"The next night further growth would have occurred, followed by a new rim the next day."

The Trust said it's the first time the pancakes, more commonly found in the Antarctic or the Baltic Sea, have been seen on the River Dee.

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Photo by Gerardine Vargas

Photo by Gerardine Vargas

Photo by Gerardine Vargas

Mysterious, purple spheres found in the desert

CREATED Jan 30, 2013

Reporter: Liz Kotalik

TUCSON (KGUN-9) - It was a normal Sunday in Vail for Geradine Vargas. Normal, until she and her husband stumbled upon something kind of weird.

"We were taking photos around the area and we just.... I mean, how could you miss this?" Geradine said. "It was just like glittering in the sun."

Thousands of tiny, purple-hued spheres piled in the middle of nowhere.

"It's just one of those things that you've never seen before."

They were watery, some where translucent, and the pile was completely isolated. Gerardine was amazed, and she wanted answers.

"We did email a friend of ours who's a zoologist, but she didn't know. I mean, she didn't seem to recognize what it was."

So, she sent KGUN-9 pictures of the spheres, hoping we could find some answers.

We checked out the mysterious spheres for ourselves, and leamed they were still there. They're like gooey marbles that ooze out a water substance when squished. They roll, they shine, and they're out of this world.

Geradine was dying to know what they were, and so were we.

We spoke to Darlene Buhrow, director of marketing at Tucson Botanical Gardens, who's husband is a botanist. He said if these are something naturally occurring, they could be a slime mold or jelly fungus.

We've received tons of calls into the newsroom tonight from viewers who think they are a product like Deco Beads, which are tiny, colored, water-filled spheres that keep plants hydrated.

But thousands of them? In the middle of the desert?

No one is positive what these spheres are, and for now, all we can say for certain is that they're definitely out of the ordinary.

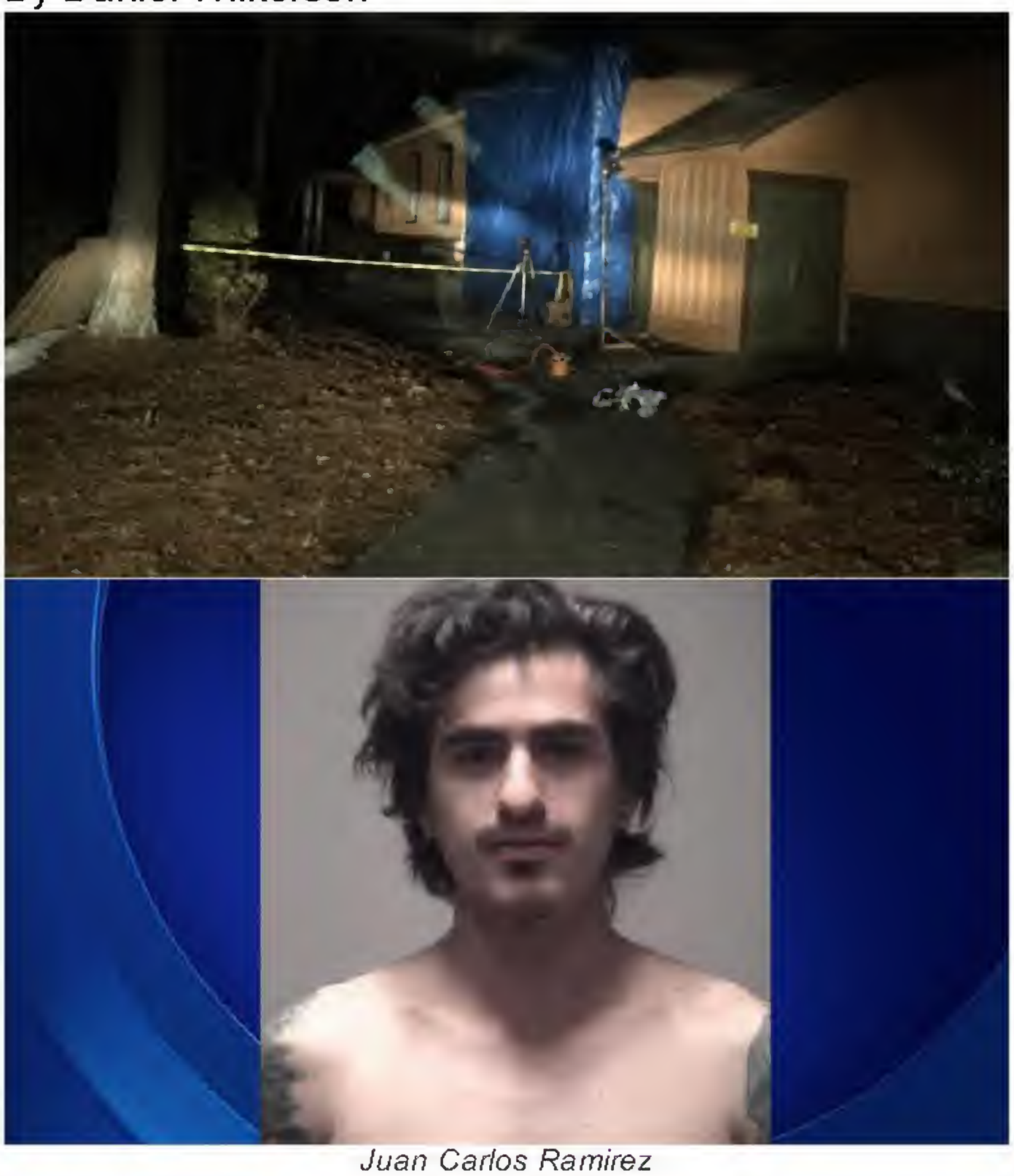
Naked arsonist claiming to be Jesus Christ sets church on fire

cbs46.com

Naked arsonist claiming to be Jesus Christ sets church on fire

Posted: Dec 14, 2014 8:47 PM PST Updated: Dec 15, 2014 5:32 PM PST

By Daniel Wilkerson



Juan Carlos Ramirez

A Roswell pastor spoke out after a man who was found naked allegedly set his church on fire.

Police arrested Juan Ramirez, 24, after they found him naked near the church. Police said Ramirez admitted to setting the church on fire.

According to the incident report, authorities responded to Old Alabama Road and Barrington Drive East after they were told a man was naked.

Authorities found the man, identified as Ramirez, and said he told them he was trying to get in touch with Indian gods.

Ramirez says he is Jesus Christ, but Father Phillip Scott thinks he's far from it.

"It was 36 degrees by the thermometer on my car and he was arrested totally nude ... I don't know about it being crazy. Let's just put it this way, there's something wrong," Scott said.

Scott built Epiphany Byzantine Catholic Church, which was left damaged after the blaze.

"He probably has some very serious problems of which we did not detect," Scott adds.

Scott said Ramirez ignited four fires on the property. The father has lived on the property for more than 35 years.

"He and his girlfriend came to church. They came late," Scott said.

He believes Ramirez visited his church not long ago.

Part of the church building burned, but Scott said they have insurance. He said several people came from all over to help clean.

If you would like to help the church, call 770-993-0973 or email Christguidesus@outlook.com.

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Naked man slept on dog beds at Pasco CVS

10 News Staff, WTSP wtsp.com

A man stripped naked and then laid down on dog beds at a CVS in Lutz, according to the Pasco County sheriff.

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Jeremiah Patterson(Photo: Pasco County Sheriff's Office)

Lutz, Florida -- A 22-year-old man is in jail after Pasco County deputies say he went to a CVS, stripped naked and then laid on several dog beds.

Deputies say Jeremiah Patterson, 22, of Odessa, was at the store Tuesday at U.S. 41 and State Road 54 when he took the beds to the bathroom and went to sleep on top of them.

The store couldn't sell the beds after that and Patterson was charged with theft

Police in Florida say a man took off his clothes, gathered dog beds and went to sleep in a CVS bathroom.

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Common Names

"Nareepol or Nareephon" (Thai origin) – literally "fruit women"
"Nariphon" (Thai origin) – Pod people
"Nareepol" (Thai origin) – Naree means "girl/woman" and pol means plant/tree
"Liyathambara" Sri Lanka
Liyathabara Mala in local Sri Lankan dialect
"Narilatha" Himalaya, INDIA
"Makkaliphon" ("fruit of the Makkali tree")

What Is the Nariphon?

The Nariphon is a tree located in the legendary Himmavanta Forest which bears fruit in the shape of young beautiful women. They are featured in Thailand's Triphum Phra Ruang (Three Worlds Cosmology, they are called Nareepol In Thailand) scripture, other local religious texts, as well as in Buddhist folklore. They have been described to look like beautiful human sized teenage girls, completely naked, with long blond or black hair and large blue eyes with golden pupils and a stem atop of its head like a amangosteen. The fruit maidens grow attached by their head from the tree branches, emerging feet-first. They emit a strong fragrance like perfume The fruit lasts for seven days, after which they wither and die if they are not picked up. Once the tree begins to bloom after 3 days the Nariphon would start to menstruate, a sign that they were ripened and "mature". The fruit begin to drop down on the 4th day, after which one would be able to pick them up. The Nariphon decay soon after dropping down to the earth, slowly shrinking and shriveling up. They have the same internal organs as humans, but lack bones. They sing and dance on the tree the whole day, attracting those who are lust-filled towards themselves.

Legend of Nariphon

Nariphon Tree

Origin of Makaliporn
To understand the origins of Makaliporn we must go back to the Vessantara Jataka, the story of the Bodhisatta's final birth. Legend has it that a very long time ago, during the era of Vipassi Buddha in the previous kappa (aeon), there was a virtuous woman named Phussati who offered the fragrant heartwood of sandalwood to the Buddha. Makaliporn were magical trees created for 2 purposes.

The first purpose was as a Dhamma-riddle. Yogis, Gandhabhas (heavenly musicians) and other deities residing in the forest who have not overcome their sexual lust would be tempted to make love with the beautiful Makaliporn. Yogi who had not conquered sexual lust would fly up to the bunches of Makaliporn and copulate with them, only to fall into a coma after having sex. The Yogis who have not attained

the power to fly would wait below the trees for the Makaliporn to ripen and drop down in 4 days time, after which they would be able to pick them up and take them home. There are stories that the yogis/hermits after taking them to wherever they sleep, and enjoying them sexually fall into a deep sleep for four months after which they would wake up and lose all their cultivation and powers.

The second purpose was to protect the royal family.
Vessantara's wife Lady Madri would be able to pick fruits in the forest without being harassed, as the lust-filled group would be totally absorbed with the 16 (12?) fascinating Makaliporn trees. As such, the Makaliporn trees did not bloom seasonally, but only when Madri went out to pick fruits. When the tree blossomed there would be many bunches of Makaliporn fruits, with 5 girls to a bunch.

According to Buddhist mythology, the God Indra created a pavilion as an abode for Vessantara, his wife and two children. His wife went into the forest to collect fruit and was constantly threatened by Hermits or Yogis who lived there. So Indra, King of the Gods, created twelve of these special Nariphon trees, which would bear fruit whenever Vessantara's wife went out to collect food, so distracting her attackers.

Being all in the image of Indra's beautiful wife, like "sweet-smelling naked sixteen-year-old girls," the men who threatened Vessantara's wife took these female-fruits instead, bringing them back to their respective homes. After making love to the "women," the men would fall asleep for four months and lose all of their power.

Specimens

display what they call the mummified remains. These, what looks like dried human-shaped fruits, are on display in a temple museum Wat Prangmuni in Singburi. picked up by the Forest Ajarns in during their Dhutanga travels

How the amulets are made

nariphon

Believed by some Buddhists to grow on the Nariphon Tree and thought they may hold some magical power. They are made from Fruit pulp and have a stalk in the top to imitate the stalk on other fruits.

fallopia multiflora
The Habenaria Grandifloriformis of southern India produces small delicate white flowers that resemble cloaked angels or fairies in flight.

Today Nariphon amulets are carried and thought to hold some magical power.

They would continue to be there until the teachings of the Buddha disappear from the world.

- July 2014

21Apr201227 Comments

by Zack Davisson in Magical Animal Stories, Uncategorized, Yōkai Stories Tags: mysterious animals, Yōkai Stories

Mizuki_Shigeru_Nekomata

Translated and sourced from Mizuki Shigeru's Mujara, Yokai Jiten, Japanese Wikipedia, and other sources

Beware of keeping your sweet and patient house cat for too long. According to Japanese folklore, once that venerable pussy reaches an ancient enough age, its tail will split into two and it will begin to walk on its hind legs. Only then will your cat begins its second life as a nekomata, a cat-like yokai with a split-tail.

What does Nekomata Mean?

Nekomata is not an easy word to translate. Most translations for names of yokai depend on the kanji, and nekomata can be written in three different ways. Note that all three are pronounced the exact same way. The most ancient form was 猫また, which uses the kanji for cat 猫(neko), with the remainder written in hiragana. Words written in hiragana have no inherent meaning and often the definition can only be guessed at.

A later variation wrote nekomata as 猫股 which again uses the kanjl 猫(neko) for cat, but then uses 股 (mata) meaning "forked." The meaning of this is straight forward, and translates as the descriptive "forked cat."

But the most common variation is the most confusing. Nekomata is most commonly written as 猫又, which combines 猫(neko) with又(mata) meaning "again. This version directly translates as "the again cat," but the reason for this is disputed. Some say it stands for the split of the tails, with "mata" being a numerical counter for tails, while some say it refers to the second life of a cat as a nekomata, thus the term "again cat."

However, both of these kanji are most likely later additions trying to add explanations to a pre-existing word, what in English would be called a folk etymology. In its original form, with "mata" written in hiragana, is thought to relate somehow to the image of the nekomata living in the forest like a monkey, leaping from tree to tree. All of these explanations are, however, pure speculation. Nobody really knows what nekomata means.

The Kamakura Period – The Nekomata of the Mountains

Most Japanese yokai were born during the Edo period, but the nekomata has more ancient

roots. Mention of the nekomata first appeared during the Kamakura period (1185-1333), where it was mentioned in the literary jottings of Yoshida Kenko in his scroll Tsurezure-gusa (徒然草; The Harvest of Leisure, also known as Essays in Idleness). Yoshida wrote "Deep in the mountains there is a creature called the nekomata. It is said that it feeds on humans." At around the same period, Fujiwara Sadaie recorded in the scroll Meigetsuki (明月記; The Record of the Clear Moon, sometimes called Diary of the Clear Moon) that on August 8th in the first year of Tenpuku (1233) in Nanto (modern day Nara prefecture) a nekomata from the mountains killed and ate several people.

Nekomata_Kill

These are typical of Kamakura period accounts of nekomata. Far from the bizarre split-tailed cat of modern accounts, the ancient nekomata was a feared beast of the mountains rumored to attack, kill, and eat humans who wandered too deep into the mountain recesses. A physical description is given in the Meigestu-gi saying a nekomata has "eyes like a cat and a body the size of a great dog."

There was nothing supernatural about these accounts of the nekomata during the Kamakura period, and it was treated like any other mountain predator. It is unknown if these accounts were based on an actual creature; there is fossil evidence of a small prehistoric Japanese tiger, and tigers were often imported from China and one could have gotten lose and made its way into the forest. Suggestions have even been made that ancient nekomata legends are based on a rabies-infected animal explaining its tendency to stalk and attack humans. But again, this is pure speculation.

The Early Edo Period – The Supernatural Nekomata

Nekomata_dancing

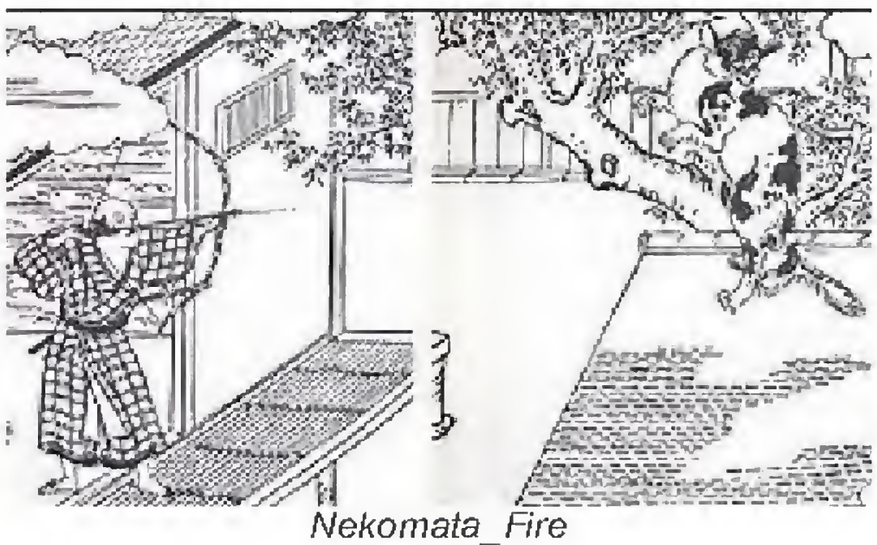
Like any good folk legend, the stories of nekomata began to change in the telling, and with each passing year nekomata increased in size. In 1685, in the book Shincho Monjyu (新著聞集; A Literary Collection of New Hearings) described the nekomata as being as larger than a wild boar. In 1775 the book Waku-shiori (倭訓栞; A Bookmark of Chinese Characters) described the nekomata to be as large as a lion or a panther, with a cry that resounded through the mountains. By 1809, in the book 寓意草 the nekomata was described as being over six feet long and large enough to carry a dog in its mouth.

The Middle Edo Period – The Nekomata Comes Indoors

The real transformation in the legends of the nekomata came during the mid-Edo period. While the mountains were still considered the abode of the great beasts, a belief arose that nekomata evolved from regular house cats that had lived a very long time. When cats grew old enough they changed into a new form and left

they households to begin their new existence as nekomata in the mountains.Because of this, it was considered dangerous to keep a cat for too long in your house.

The belief was expounded on by Yusoku Kojitsu and Ise Fudatake, who wrote in their respective books Ansei Zuihitsu (安斎随筆; The Literary Jottings of Ansei) and Kazusai no Neko (数歳; Cats of Various Ages) that the tail of these old cats would split into two tails at the time of transformation. The scholar Arai Hakuseki further popularized this new belief in his essays on the mysteries of cats that were printed in widely-circulated newspapers.



Nekomata_Fire

One of the most famous accounts of nekomata is the 1708 Yamato Kaiiki (大和怪異記; Mysterious Stories from Japan) story The Nekomata Fire (猫股の火) which tells the tale of a samurai whose house is taken over by a poltergeist-like haunting that is only ended when the family cat is killed and revealed to have two tails. This story was later adapted by Mizuki Shigeru for his comic Nekomata.

This version of the nekomata has completely taken over the Kamakura period beliefs, and it is almost impossible to find a modern depiction of nekomata that does not show the split-tailed monster.

Nekomata Art

During the Edo period, illustrated reference books called zukan were published, including the popular kaidan emaki—illustrated kaidan manuals. Nekomata regularly appeared in these manuals.

Possibly the most famous picture of a nekomata comes from the book Hyakki Zukan (百怪図巻; An Illustrated Manual of One Hundred Weird Tales) by Sawagi Sushi. Sawagi drew an unconventional and ironic picture of a nekomata looking like a young woman playing the shamisen. At the time, shamisen were made from the stretched skin of female cats, and the cat looks to be singing a melancholy song while playing an instrument possibly made from a relative. Because the nekomata is dressed in the garb of a geisha, it is also a possible reference to a geisha whose nickname was “Cat.”

Toriyama sekien’s picture of a nekomata from his Gazu Hyakki Yako (画図百鬼夜行; The Illustrated Night Parade of a Hundred Demons) is also tinged with humor. His illustrations shows three cats, one a nekomata with a split-tale and two regular cats. The nekomata appears to be showing off walking on its hind legs, while the younger cat tries to imitate it can’t, because it isn’t old enough to transform yet.

Like many Japanese folklore creatures, in modern times the nekomata is depicted as cute and is far removed from the ferocious, man-eating beast of the Kamakura period. Probably the most famous modern nekomata is the character Kirara from the comic book InuYasha.

Nekomata and Other Supernatural Cats

Nekomata_main

Nekomata_Edo

Japan is full of supernatural cats and cat-lore, of which the nekomata is only one. Because of the glint in a cat's eyes and their mysterious nature, cats have been thought to be supernatural from ancient times, and able to deliver curses. It was said that to kill a cat would result in seven lifetimes of inauspicious rebirth.

Other cat yokai include the kasha (火車), a type of demon that arouse from a cat owned by someone who died. If people weren't careful, the cat would transform into a kasha and steal the body away before a funeral could be held. Nekomata are often mistaken for bakeneko(化け猫), another transformed cat, although they are two different creatures.

Nekomata_inuyasha

You can still see the lingering evidence of nekomata beliefs in place names around Japan. In Echu province (modern day Toyama prefecture) there was a mountain that was said to be the site of several nekomata slayings named Nekomata Mountain, and in Aizu provice (modern day Fukushima prefecture) a mountain named Nekomata Peak is has several nekomata legends associated with it.

Translator's Note:

This was posted by request for reader Aub Driver, who was looking for references for a nekomata tattoo. I found a whole lot of history, but not a whole lot of images. Sorry Aub! Hope the article sparks some inspiration though!

1. Korin Thyans
Apr 21, 2012 @ 03:17:19

Great blog. Any idea where Nekomata kill pic comes from?

- Zack Davisson
Apr 21, 2012 @ 12:34:34

Thanks! The pic comes from Gojin Ishihara's 1972 book "Illustrated Book of Japanese Monsters" (妖怪画集). Its a great book full of illustrations of yokai.

2. mcur
Apr 30, 2012 @ 00:23:26

"However, both of these kanji are most likely later additions trying to add explanations to a pre-existing word, what in English would be called a backronym."

I think you mean a folk etymology. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Folk_etymology
A backronym is something different.

- Zack Davisson
Apr 30, 2012 @ 06:58:44

Probably! I will fix that. Thanks!

3. Bruna M.
May 05, 2012 @ 21:53:30

I really love your blog, and searching for more ghost and yokai stories, i found this image: http://uploads4.wikipaintings.org/images/utagawa-kuniyoshi/tiger-1.jpg from Utagawa Kuniyoshi, I guess [I don't really trust this site]. If you take a good look at the pic, you will see that this tiger have two tails. And remembered me of this post. What do you think? xD

- Zack Davisson
May 12, 2012 @ 12:44:21

Thanks! And that is an Utagawa Kuniyoshi painting, but I don't believe it is supposed to be a nekomata. That painting has no title, but it is a depiction of a tiger walking on a windy day, and I think the two tails is an attempt to depict motion. The painting starts at the bottom, and with each transitional "wipe" the tiger is in a different place in time.

- Bruna M.
May 12, 2012 @ 17:01:22

Wow. That's so cool. XD

4. Mariah
Jun 18, 2012 @ 04:53:19

i love all of the cat-related stories! but i was just curious,are you sure bakeneko and nekomata aren't related? i could be wrong of course,but i read that when some cats died,they became bakeneko,and sometimes the tail would split and they'ed become nekomata,and cat owners would prevent this by cutting the tails off cats. But i'm sure there's lots of ways to tell the stories,i just thought i'd share my information :)

- Zack Davisson

Jun 18, 2012 @ 10:34:29

Hey Mariah,

Glad you are enjoying the cat-lore! As to the bakeneko and nekomata being related, well, they are both yokai cats, so you could say they are "related" in that sense. They have the similarities shared by all Japanese cat-folklore; they are long-lived cats who transformed.–Although not after death. The cats have to be alive to transform. And they also share the cat-tail power. It is true that people used to cut the tails off of their cats. That is sometimes seen as the origin of the Japanese bob-tailed cat that still exists, probably bred through selection.

But they are different folklore creatures–0 And I have seen several Japanese sources that go out of their way to state that bekeneko and nekomata are not the same. The real difference is that bakeneko are shape-changers, and nekomata are not. Think of bakeneko as cats-in-human-form, and nekomata as big monster cats. I'm sure you could find a story or two that goes against type–It is folklore, and there are no hard and fast rules. But that is the general distinction.

And I would be wary of many of the English-language sites dealing with yokai. I have seen quite a few that are simply incorrect … usually bad information posted somewhere that is then endlessly repeated.

5. Mark Schumacher

Feb 17, 2014 @ 01:45:02

You are a gifted translator and teller of tales. I enjoy your site immensely. As for your Nekomata (split-tailed cat), I would like to mention two "probably" related items:

Cats and Shamisen. In your story, you mention the famous nekomata picture from the Edo-era book Hyakki Zukan (百怪図巻, An Illustrated Manual of One Hundred Weird Tales) by Sawagi Sushi. This picture portrays a woman-like cat playing the shamisen. There is an old Japanese proverb that goes 風が吹けば桶屋が儲かる (Kaze ga fukeba, okeya ga mō karu), which literally means "When the wind blows, the barrel maker makes money." The proverb signifies the "interconnectedness of all things" (i.e., the domino effect). The story behind the proverb employs cats and shamisen. To wit: "When the wind blows, it kicks up dust. Dust gets into people's eyes and causes some people to go blind. Blind people in old Japan turned to music to make a living, commonly becoming shamisen-playing storytellers. The shamisen is made from cat skin. An increase in the population of blind people equates to a decline in the cat population. Fewer cats equate to more rats. More rats equate to more scavenging of rice supplies. More rat scavenging forces people to order more barrels to protect their rice. Hence, when the winds blows, barrel makers get rich.

Split Tail of Cat "Probably" Linked to Ancient Fox Lore. In your story, you say that when a cat reaches a certain age, its tail will split into two and it will begin to walk on its hind

legs and become powerful. This is strikingly similar to Chinese/Japanese fox lore. Foxes grow in power as they age. They grow a tail for each century of life. When they reach 900 years of age, a nine-tailed fox 九尾狐 gains the power of infinite vision (in some texts, the creature is a good omen, in others a bad omen). For many more details, see http://www.onmarkproductions.com/html/tanuki.shtml#origins

Finally, the picture you present of a dancing white cat dressed in a red robe comes from Kawanabe Kyōsai 河鍋暁斎 (1831-1889), a spoof of a 12th-century hand scroll known as Frolicking Animals & Humans (Chōjū Jinbutsu Giga 鳥獣人物戯画). The latter work is a national treasure at Kōzan-ji Temple 高山寺 (Kyoto). In any case, if you look at the entire painting, you could also "justifiable" call the creature a white fox (not a white cat), for beside it is a tanuki — and the tanuki is very closely related to the fox. The color white is also important, for white foxes are considered especially powerful and serve as the mount or animal companion of Inari (kami of rice) as well as the mount of Dakiniten and various Tengu. At the end of the day, however, we can only speculate, for Cat/Fox/Tanuki lore is a very complex topic.

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Sight for sore eyes: 'Maverick' doctor who restored the vision of 100,000 people

By Sophie Brown , for CNN
December 15, 2014 – Updated 1026 GMT (1826 HKT)

cnn.com

Nepal's miracle eye doctor heals 100,000

STORY HIGHLIGHTS

- Nepalese doctor, Sanduk Ruit, has restored the vision of 100,000 people over 30 years
- Ruit has provided treatment to those living in remote areas in North Korea, China, and Nepal
- World Health Organization estimates 39 million people are blind worldwide

(CNN) -- It takes Sanduk Ruit about five minutes to change someone's life.

In that time, the Nepalese doctor can make a small incision in his patient's eye, remove the cloudy cataract impairing her vision and replace it with an inexpensive artificial lens.

"Some of our younger surgeons even do it faster than that," Ruit told CNN.

For many patients, it's the first time they've seen in years, if not decades.

In the past 30 years, Ruit has personally restored the sight of more than 100,000 people across Asia and Africa, and taught his rapid-fire technique to countless other eye surgeons in parts of the world as isolated as North Korea.

His patients suffer from eye conditions that are mostly preventable. But because of poverty and limited access to public health services they have been unable to seek treatment.

Their story is all too common in the developing world. An estimated 39 million people are blind

worldwide, according to the World Health Organization. Of these, around 90% live in low-income areas and 80% suffer from conditions that can be prevented or cured.

Reaching remote communities

Driven by a belief that the world's poorest people deserve safe, affordable and high-quality eye care just as much as anyone else, Ruit has made it his mission to eradicate avoidable blindness.

In 1994, he joined the late Australian ophthalmologist and philanthropist Fred Hollows, who was his mentor and close friend, in establishing Tilganga -- an eye hospital in Kathmandu dedicated to providing world-class eye care to the people of Nepal.

The hospital manufactures state-of-the-art lenses that are commonly used in treating cataracts or myopia, and exports them to more than 30 countries worldwide.

For those who cannot reach urban areas, Ruit and his team conduct mobile eye camps in remote parts of Nepal and neighboring countries, often trekking for days and cleaning out structures like tents, classrooms or even animal stables for use as temporary operating theaters.

When the eye patches come off the day after an operation, it's an incredibly moving moment for all involved.

Australian photographer Michael Amendolia has been capturing these intimate scenes -- the expressions of relief and tears of joy -- while traveling with Ruit and his colleagues since the early 1990s.

To mark the 20th anniversary of Tilganga, Amendolia has released some of his most striking images of Ruit and his team at work in Nepal and other countries in the region, including Bhutan, China, Myanmar, North Korea and Indonesia.

Watch this video

READ: 'Bionic eye' lets blind man 'see' again

Infiltrating North Korea

I am so grateful that I can make a difference in so many people's lives Dr. Sanduk Ruit

Amendolia, who described Ruit as "a maverick in some ways," accompanied the Nepalese surgeon on one of the first trips to North Korea in 2006.

The Communist state is notoriously closed off to Westerners. International aid workers frequently struggle to reach those most in need, in a country where two-thirds of the population experiences chronic food shortages, according to the United Nations.

But Ruit, who believes in leaving politics to world leaders, had persuaded the North Korean authorities to allow his team to conduct the 2006 surgery and training session in the south-eastern city of Haeju after he had treated one of their diplomats stationed at the embassy in Kathmandu.

"It was very restrictive," said Amendolia. "We made the same path from the hotel in Haeju, the same way every day to the hospital, the same way exactly back and that's all we saw of Haeju for the seven or so days that we were there."

Amendolia describes how the North Korean surgeons, who came from across the country, were so eager to learn that they huddled close to Ruit, leaning over the operating table to get a better look as he worked.

"I've never seen an eye operation where (Ruit) had so many surgeons around him," he said.

In the room where the recovering patients were examined, portraits of then-leader Kim Jong Il and his predecessor Kim Il Sung hung from the wall.

Transforming lives

80-year-old man sees son for the first time in a decade.

80-year-old man sees son for the first time in a decade.

One of the most moving images in Amendolia's collection is that of an 80-year-old North Korean man who sees his son for the first time in 10 years after being completely blind in both eyes.

"Of course, the man who's had the operation is so relieved because he can see again, but the whole family suddenly have a family member who can participate again in everything that happens as home," Amendolia said.

Patients who are blind in both eyes require constant care, placing a burden on their families that can keep them trapped in a cycle of poverty. But this quick-healing surgery allows them to regain their independence.

The same transformative moment is played out for long-neglected patients in the mountains of Nepal, the islands of Indonesia and rural China.

Ruit grew up in a small village in the Himalayas so isolated that the nearest school was a week's walk away. When he was 17, his sister died of tuberculosis despite the disease being treatable. The loss left Ruit with a sense of urgency to pursue a path that benefited others, not only himself.

It's a decision he doesn't regret.

"I am so grateful that I can make a difference in so many people's lives," Ruit said.

At 59, that same sense of urgency that motivated him as a young man remains. When asked what it feels like to watch as a patient sees the world clearly the first time, he responded: "It really recharges you and makes you move forward."

But he cautioned that there remains so much he wants to do.

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New 'Mothman' Sighting in Point Pleasant - Cryptozoology News

- Wednesday, December 17, 2014

By Cryptozoology News December 12th, 2014

POINT PLEASANT, W.Va.– A student says he and another person were startled by a creature they believed to be the Mothman.

The City of Point Pleasant, West Virginia.

T.D., a 16-year-old Tennessean who provided his full name but was omitted as per the standard code of journalism ethics regarding disclosure of the identity of a minor, told Cryptozoology News on Thursday that he was visiting a friend in Point Pleasant, a West Virginian town with a population of 4,000, when the event took place back in 2010.

"I was spending the night with a friend," said the Kenton, Tennessee, resident. "We both saw a black figure outside the house, standing in the road. I thought it was a giant owl of some sort," he added.

The two friends were "hiding behind a window" and "constantly peeking out" to see if the cryptid was still there.

"It would not go away," the witness explained.

After a while, he says, they decided to go out of the house "with a baseball bat" and "yelled at it", but the alleged beast emitted a "loud, ear-deafening screech" and flew away.

The eyewitness said the creature was about 7 feet tall, "jet black" and with an owl-like face featuring dark red glowing eyes.

"It had no fur, only skin. The wingspan was of at least 6 or 7 feet across."

No pictures or videos were taken at the time of the incident.

The Mothman, a ghostly winged humanoid, was reportedly first seen on November, 12, 1966 in Point Pleasant, West Virginia. The original report stated that five men were digging a grave at the local cemetery when they spotted the cryptid. Three days later, two different couples reported seeing a "flying human" with red-glowing eyes chasing their vehicles.

According to cryptozoological literature, the creature is believed to be able to predict upcoming events that have the potential to impact human life. The Mothman Prophecies, written by parapsychologist author John Keel in 1975, painstakingly describes the events that

The Athens Messenger

Monster No Joke For Those Who Saw It

Newspaper The Athens Messenger's followup story on original Mothman sighting in Point Pleasant. Credit: The Athens Messenger

lead to the collapse of the Silver Bridge. The story was later brought to the big screen by director Mark Pellington and starring Richard Gere on a film with the book's name.

Encounters with flying humanoids around the world have been reported throughout the years and some people believe them to be "angels" or "demons".

In late October, Nick Malicki, who calls himself the *Nephilim Hunter*, released footage of what he says was a "Nephilim" creature attached to the roof of an undisclosed cave in Australia.

Earlier this year, a lecturer at the Manchester Metropolitan University in England shared a series of photographs depicting little "flying humanoids" he called "fairies".

In 2007, a police officer from Mexico admitted to being attacked by a flying humanoid while on patrol in the city of Monterrey.

In 1976, two children in the UK reported to have seen a large unidentified winged creature they described as a "nasty bird man", hovering over the 13th Century church's tower in the village of Mawnan, Cornwall.

The Tennessee student says he has "told a few people" about his "Mothman encounter" but that, so far, the feedback has been negative.

"They said that I was crazy," he said.

5,293 views

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Newborn baby girl found being 'eaten alive' by ants

mirror.co.uk

A newborn baby girl was found being 'eaten alive' by ants after she was dumped naked in a rubbish bin in India.

The girl, who was just two hours old, was found covered in ant bites close to a school in Bhopal.

School security guard Ahmed Kahn, 32, made the shocking discovery and said the baby girl was clearly in pain.

The 32-year-old said: "I heard the sound of a baby crying but at first thought it was some kids messing around.

"But as it continued I realised it was coming from a bin across the road and when I went over I saw this blood red body of a baby covered in ants.

EuroPics[CEN]

Grim: The newborn was found naked and covered in ant bites

"It was truly horrifying.

"The baby was waving its arms and legs around to get away from the pain from the bites because it was covered in ants.

"They were crawling all over her and eating her alive.

"I immediately pulled her out, beat off the ants and called an ambulance."

The baby was taken to hospital and is now in a critical condition.

Horrified: Locals left shocked by the discovery can be seen at the scene

Police say they have now tracked the mother down after studying CCTV footage showing a hooded woman dumping the naked child in the bin.

A police spokesman said: "The woman is from the city of Chindwada but moved here last year and was living with her sister.

"She became pregnant with a man who slept with her on the pretext of getting married, but then disappeared.

"Overcome with guilt and shame she disposed of the newborn baby to avoid humiliation and social stigma.

"She was arrested and could be charged with endangering the life of a child."

A hospital spokesman said: "She was about two-hours-old and was in a very bad way.

"We are keeping her under constant observation."

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Now It's Safe To Cook Bacon While You're Naked

The Huffington Post | *By Ron Dicker*

huffingtonpost.com

Posted: 12/10/2014 5:13 pm EST Updated: 3 hours ago

Like to cook bacon in your birthday suit? The makers of a new product insist you need protection in that sensitive area.

Behold, the Naked Bacon Cooking Armor.

bacon

The product, developed by J&D's Foods, is "constructed from a hard plastic shell covered with foam then enclosed in vinyl," co-founder Justin Esch told HuffPost. "It truly is the gold standard of genital grease burn protection."

He said he hopes the groin protector will also inspire those who do their sizzling with clothes on to take them off.

"We're just opening the door," he said. "With any luck you step through it because happiness is waiting on the other side."

Esch and co-founder Dave Lefkow assure that the product is real. It has a real price tag, too: $14.99 plus shipping and handling.

But the two, who also developed Baconlube, thankfully treat the Naked Bacon Cooking Armor like a novelty. (Otherwise, we'd be worried.)

"Cooking and eating bacon naked has been said to be the equivalent of winning the lottery, scoring a touchdown in the Super Bowl and neck-punching Justin Bieber all at once," their press release states.

One of the developers knows your pain, nude bacon-cookers. Asked by HuffPost if he has had bacon grease splattered on his privates, Lefkow replied, "It's not an experience I'll ever forget."

naked bacon

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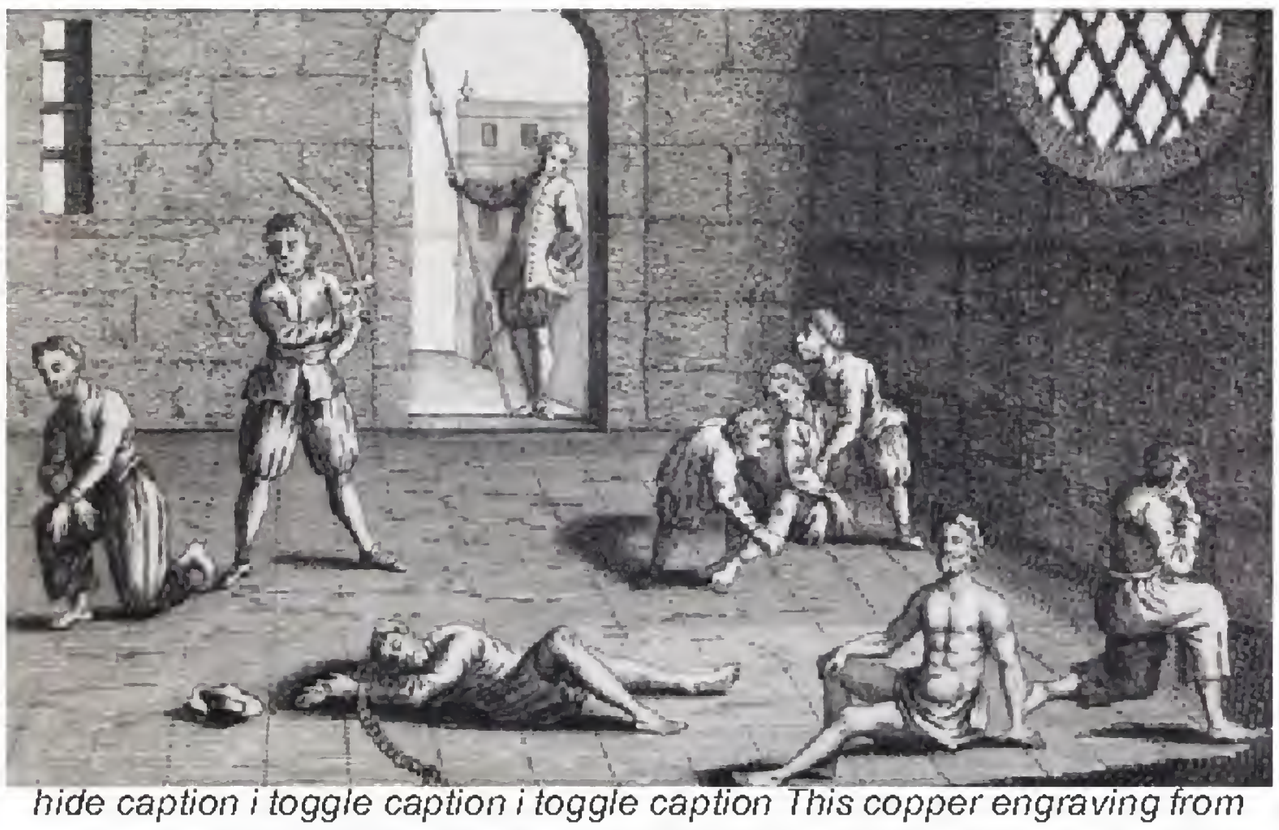
Nutmeg Spice Has A Secret Story That Isn't So Nice

December 26, 2014

npr.org



hide caption i toggle caption i toggle caption This copper engraving from approximately 1700 depicts the condition of the English prisoners at the hands of the Dutch. In the 1660s, Cornell University's Eric Tagliacozzo says, the conflict and competition for the spice trade came to a head. "The Dutch decapitated a number of English merchants who were also in the Spice Islands trying to profit from the trade."

This copper engraving from approximately 1700 depicts the condition of the English prisoners at the hands of the Dutch. In the 1660s, Cornell University's Eric Tagliacozzo says, the conflict and competition for the spice trade came to a head. "The Dutch decapitated a number of English merchants who were also in the Spice Islands trying to profit from the trade."

WikiCommons

Ah, nutmeg! Whether it's sprinkled on eggnog, baked into spice cake or blended into a latte, this pungent spice can evoke memories of holidays past.

Aired on Morning Edition Nov. 26, 2012.

But a lot of blood has been shed over this little brown seed. "Nutmeg has been one of the saddest stories of history," says culinary historian Michael Krondl. If you listen to my story, you'll hear the gruesome, grisly tale of how the Dutch tortured and massacred the people of the nutmeg-producing Banda Islands in Indonesia in an attempt to monopolize the nutmeg trade.

So, why was nutmeg so valuable? Well, Krondl likens it to the iPhone of the 1600s. It was fashionable among the wealthy. It was exotic and potent enough to induce hallucinations — or at least a nutmeg bender, as detailed in this account from *The Atlantic*.

Nutmeg was considered medicinal, according this 16th-century description: "Nutmegs be good for them the which have cold in their head, and doth comfort the sight and brain, & the mouth of the stomach &

Nutmeg was considered medicinal, according this 16th-century description: "Nutmegs be good for them the which have cold in their head, and doth comfort the sight and brain, & the mouth of the stomach & is good for the spleen."

Karen Castillo Farfán/NPR

"Nutmeg really does have chemical constituents that make you feel good," explains culinary historian Kathleen Wall of the Plimoth Plantation. And traditionally, we turn to nutmeg (along with cloves and cinnamon) this time of year because these

is good for the spleen." spices — as the settlers to the colonies believed — can help warm us up and even help us fight off head colds and stomachaches.

And for foodies, nutmeg is an ideal spice for layering flavor. We visited Chef Kyle Bailey of Birch and Barley restaurant in Washington, D.C., who combined spinach and nutmeg to whip up a divine puree that marries the flavors beautifully:

- Start by melting 1 tablespoon of butter in a skillet. Add 2 tablespoons of shallots and saute. Add 4 cups of spinach. Cook on high heat until wilted.
- Grate a heavy pinch of nutmeg. Sprinkle it over the spinach as it cooks until wilted.
- Put the spinach into a blender.
- Puree until the mixture is the consistency of paint.

Karen Castillo Farfán/NPR

- Just before you plate the puree, add a splash of lemon. Serve under fish like salmon or sturgeon and enjoy.

I must also mention a bit of nutmeg history that makes good dinner-party conversation: the question of whether the Dutch traded Manhattan (yes, New York) for nutmeg.

In the 1600s, "the Dutch and the British were kind of shadowing each other all over the globe," explains Cornell historian Eric Tagliacozzo. They were competing for territory and control of the spice trade. In 1667, after years of battling, they sat down to hash out a treaty.

"Both had something that the other wanted," explains Krondl. The British wanted to hold onto Manhattan, which they'd managed to gain control of a few

years earlier. And the Dutch wanted the last nutmeg-producing island that the British controlled, as well as territory in South America that produced sugar.

"So they [the Dutch] traded Manhattan, which wasn't so important in those days, to get nutmeg and sugar."

And back then, the Dutch considered it a sweet deal!

A version of this story was first published Nov. 26, 2012.

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Occult expert: Santa Muerte statue at cemetery designed to kill

sbnewspaper.com

January 18, 2013

A statue of the Santa Muerte is pictured at the San Benito Municipal Cemetery on Thursday, when two local women expressed concern that the folk figure's image was "disrespectful" to the memory of those buried on the grounds. (Staff photos by Michael Rodriguez and Francisco E. Jimenez)

By FRANCISCO E. JIMENEZ & MICHAEL RODRIGUEZ
San Benito News

Santa Muerte 1

Shrouded in a veil of secrecy as murky as its signature black cloak, the identity of the owner of an oddly-placed 3-feet-high statue of the *Santisima Muerte* in the middle of the San Benito Municipal Cemetery has become somewhat of a mystery.

On Thursday, two local women, who we'll call Samantha and Sarah, expressed concern with the statue and called its presence "disrespectful" to the departed whose final resting places are located in the vicinity of where the porcelain folk figure – or *Santa Muerte* as it's more commonly referred to in the Rio Grande Valley and elsewhere – was placed.

The statue depicts Death atop a crushed pile of skulls, cloaked in black and wielding a bronze globe in its left hand and a scythe in its right. Two incense sticks were found inside the sculpture, one within the globe that was visible through a gaping hole and another inside the base, which appeared to have been broken to gain access. It's also accompanied by a bronze owl perched near the base and a tag tied to the scythe that displays a crowned Winged Death dangling a heart from a string.

"I noticed the statue on Monday (January 14) when I came to visit my mom's grave," said 61-year-old Samantha. "First of all, a statue like this shouldn't be placed at a city cemetery. Whoever it belongs to should have a little more respect for our loved ones and the other people who are buried here."

Samantha said she initially recalled the statue located beside a tree near a path which cuts through the cemetery. On Wednesday, Samantha said she returned to the cemetery and noticed that the statue had been moved directly underneath the tree and closer to the path.

"I don't have anything against people who worship that statue, just not here at our city cemetery," Samantha said. "It is disrespectful to our loved ones."

Fifty-nine year-old Sarah of San Benito agreed.

"I'm not scared of it, it doesn't bother me at all because I'm into a lot of prayer," Sarah said while motioning to the statue. "It doesn't faze me, but it is still being disrespectful to these people. I'm pretty sure that most of the people who are here are Catholic. For someone to come and put that here is very disrespectful."

Sarah said she's been in contact with officials from the City of San Benito and the San Benito Police Department to have the statue removed.

"We called the city, and they said that it shouldn't be here, but the police said that they couldn't do anything about it," Sarah said. "I hope they do remove it or whoever owns it should come for it and put it at their house. Not here."

According to City Manager Manuel Lara, complaints about the statue had previously not been brought to his attention, but he agreed that it should be removed if no one claims it.

"I hadn't heard anything about it; I haven't heard anything from the staff either," Lara said. "If I have complaints, and it is not placed on a burial site that is identified, then of course (it'll be removed). I'll get my staff together to see if we can identify if it's on a burial site. We'll try to contact whomever we might be able to get in touch with on that burial site and see if they have placed it there. If someone else has placed it there, then we can have it removed at the request of the community."

Dr. Antonio N. Zavaleta, a professor of anthropology at the University of Texas at Brownsville and renowned expert on the occult, believes the statue's purpose is malicious in nature.

"It's definitely being used in a work of witchcraft, probably a spell to harm or kill someone," Zavaleta stated via email correspondence after viewing photos of the statue.

A student of folk religion and border cults for over 40 years, during which time he's authored and co-authored a number of published books ranging in subjects from *curanderos* to a comprehensive history of the Rio Grande Valley, Zavaleta has aided authorities from all over the country in identifying and understanding ritualistic crimes. In fact, Zavaleta said he's been asked to serve as an expert witness in cases in New Mexico, Arizona, California, Washington, D.C., Miami, Florida and Chicago, Illinois.

Regarding the statue's imagery, and considering his expertise, Zavaleta felt confident in identifying the tag as showing that Death has claimed a life. "The whole thing is fascinating," the professor further remarked.

Zavaleta said the owl is also a clear indication of *brujeria*, or witchcraft. "It's a *búho*, or *lechuza* – a classic symbol of the witch, and the owl is the witch that takes the form of a person in Mexican-American culture and literally flies to the place where the spell is to be cast, where the harm is to be done to the person. It's part of a spell and it definitely has a significance, I just have to look at it."

The professor did just that on Friday when he accompanied *San Benito News* reporters to the cemetery to take a closer look. Afterwards, Zavaleta estimated the sculpture's worth to be in the vicinity of $100 to $200. Also, Zavaleta believes the statue is the work of someone who paid a witch to inflict harm on another person.

"Someone, a man or woman, is doing witchcraft for pay," Zavaleta said. "Somebody has paid the witch; they don't do it for free and it (witchcraft) could easily go for a couple thousand dollars. So it definitely needs to be removed. The city should remove it, and that should be the end of it."

Actually, Zavaleta said the best course of action may even be to burn the sculpture. The city manager said he's already notified his staff of the statue and is currently determining an appropriate means of disposal, which may not occur until after this weekend.

"You see this on TV or in motion pictures, but not here in San Benito," Lara said. "Our communication regarding the cemetery is to make sure that it's cleaned up, that they pick up the trash, make sure the grass is mowed and manicured. We just want the people of the community to be proud of the burial sites that they have for their loved ones."

Identifying the worshiping of *Santa Muerte* and its use in witchcraft as a fairly new phenomenon,

Zavaleta said there are many who have common misconceptions regarding its practice.

"It's not a saint," Zavaleta said of the *Santa Muerte* figure, of which its roots he traced back to Mexico City during the 1980s. "Some people think it's a Catholic saint, but it is not. It's a folk figure. It's not even a folk saint. It's only existed for about 30 years... Thirty years ago there was no such thing, and here it is. It's very popular."

Given the statue's ominous nature, which the professor believes is to cause someone's death, Zavaleta said he was surprised to see it placed near a path not far from the road. "You want that to be clandestine," he said. "You want it to be hidden; you don't want it to be found out. They do their best not to be found out."

Still, this isn't the first time he's witnessed such imagery at the city's cemetery. "There's been activity here in this cemetery, but to my knowledge it has been a while," Zavaleta said. "If I were to walk here and study (the cemetery), I could probably uncover some other things, but what for? There's no purpose in it. These witches, people who practice black magic – especially with *Santa Muerte* – they're going to always lay out their work once they're done with it. They're going to lay it out in a cemetery."

Read this story in the Jan. 20 edition of the San Benito News, or subscribe to our E-Edition by clicking here.

Tags: brujeria, Dr. Antonio Zavaleta, occult, Rio Grande Valley, Santa Muerte, South Texas, witchcraft

Permanent link to this article: http://sbnewspaper.com/2013/01/18/occult-expert-santa-muerte-statue-at-cemetery-designed-to-kill/

15 comments

1. **QBSB**

   Is it concrete?? If not burn it. I'm worried its aimed at someone that passes by there on a daily basis.

   True Catholics don't give that kind of stuff a second thought. Our faith is in God Almighty not this stupidity.But that doesn't mean we don't care that others do belive in that crap and that we aren't worried for their safety.
   I'm sure Mr. Lara will do the right thing and get rid of it period. I'm surprised Dr. Zavaleta doesn't have a collection of this memoribilia in a warehouse somewhere, being that its his specialty.I don't know, I feel if you don't belive in it , it wont harm you.....

2. **Think About It**

   January 21, 2013 at 11:00 am

   Certainly some of form restriction that is already in place addressing what may or may not be erected, placed, or displayed on cemetery grounds exists. Here's an idea, let's take this statue, place it in an open field, sell tickets to watch Dr. Zavaleta set a match to it and donate the money raised to charity. So in essence, what is or may be evil, will have been destroyed and at the same time helped someone in need. Oh wait, don't forget, we absolutely must invite mariachi's, food vendors, and maybe even a small carnival. My gosh, I think we've created the first annual "Burning of Evil Festival." All in effort to raise money for charity.

3. **QBSB**

   January 21, 2013 at 4:25 pm

   Hahahahahahahahahaha...That a GOOD one!!!

4. **howard johnson**

January 21, 2013 at 9:01 pm

It can't be any worse then some of the kids that dress up in horror costumes and run around the streets asking for candy during halloween. Just wait till halloween comes around I bet the statue will be stolen from the cemetery and used as a decoration at some hunted house somewhere in the RGV. " No man for real"! I am not kidding! Some smart people in the RGV will do that...

5. **luis**

January 22, 2013 at 9:41 am

sucks how even in the afterlife they dont have freedom of religion... how do you know the person buried didnt belive in that? if they take it down take down the crosses... its a city cementary not a christian/cathlic one...

1. **Editor**

January 22, 2013 at 9:55 am

The statue is not associated with any known grave in the area. This is why city officials are attempting to identify an owner before taking any action. It's all in the story.

6. **Chantel**

January 22, 2013 at 5:46 pm

Seems silly to get so worked up over a statue. I kinda like it.

1. **howard johnson**

January 22, 2013 at 11:24 pm

Well if you ask me I prefer a COHIBA over a WHITE OWL any day.

7. **Jess**

January 22, 2013 at 6:07 pm

Occult expert? Owls are symbols of the underworld in Mexican cultures dating back to Pre-Colombian times. They are depicted in the codex borgia as underworld figures, not witch figures, and Santa Muerte herself is based off of the Aztec goddess Mictlancacihuatl, the goddess of the underworld. Owls were the messengers of her and her husband, i.e. of death, and she wore owl feathers in her hair. There is nothing here about killing anyone, I can cite multiple academic sources that it's a harmless statue meant to honor St.Death.

8. **Eric**

January 22, 2013 at 7:14 pm

This guy is not an expert, but some person who got a second hand story and became an expert.. Owls represent many things, not only lechuzas like the man says. The statue that has been placed there is for honoring someone, not black magick like the man says, although some do indeed use it for those reasons in this case it is not. I do believe that in a place like this it shouldn't be put, i do believe in freedom of religion and belief whatever those might be, If your going to explain something Dr., explain both sides. It is a representation of death, in this case I believe the person

that put it there, did so to guard someone buried there. Also seeing that cemeteries are holy ground, it is a place that has great power.

9. **drea**

January 22, 2013 at 8:44 pm

i'm kind of disgusted at the fact that you all are having a poll about if they should burn it? this is america and owls represent a lot of things through out history. this is absolutely ridiculous.

> 1. **Editor**
>
> January 22, 2013 at 9:47 pm
>
> You're disgusted with a poll to gauge public opinion yet point out that "this is America" as if to insinuate that freedoms have been suppressed? Ridiculous indeed. Keep in mind that you can always participate in the poll by voting for the following, "The city should leave the statue alone because it represents the owner's religious beliefs;" after all, "this is America."

10. **QBSB**

January 23, 2013 at 2:54 pm

Ms Drea, whatever the statue represents to you or anyone else..one does'nt just go set something like that in the middle of no where; the middle of your living room; the middle of the road OR the middle of a cemetary just because. I'm sure of one things:that if it was next to your mothers plot you wouldn't be too happy. Or that you probably have no one resting there so you could care less.

11. **Morgan**

January 23, 2013 at 3:58 pm

Anyone who has been to Mexico knows that "Santa Muerte" is VERY popular there, and is used by those in the drug trade as a protection. Go to any "botanica" and you will find these statues with offerings of cigarettes, coins, food, candles, etc. gathered on or around them. I am a Wiccan and have never known any witch to use these statues in any kind of ritual or spell, but it's possible that they do in Mexico.

If this statue wasn't placed by a relative of someone buried in the cemetery, I would suggest that it be moved out of the cemetery and at least put into storage in the city yard for a while to see if anyone claims it. If not, it could be sold at auction (use the proceeds for upkeep for the cemetery).

12. **K.Mennem**

February 14, 2013 at 9:54 am

Dr. Antonio N. Zavaleta is completely misinformed on Santa Muerte. The roots of the shrine go much further than 30 years. Please read my article on Santa Muerte if you want real information, not fear mongering.
http://www.uncut-reports.com/#!/2013/02/santa-muerte.html

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Ohaguro-bettari

Ohaguro-bettari is a female yokai in Japanese mythology.

Etymology

Long ago, when a Japanese woman got married she blackened her teeth as a sign of her married status. This was called ohaguro ("black teeth").

Appearance

In the Ehon hyaku monogatari Ohaguro-bettari is pictured as a woman in a bridal kimono with a mouth of blackened teeth and no other facial features, the image evoking a feeling of deep eeriness.

Origin

Some accounts suggest that she was formerly a woman who sold the teeth blackener, or an unattractive woman who was unable to get married and committed suicide, her ghost becoming the ohaguro bettari. Some also say that she could be a tanuki or mujina in disguise while others disagree and it is unclear what her true form really is.

Behavior

Ohaguro-bettari usually appears at twilight usually in a shrine or temple outside of a town. There are also stories of one appearing in one's own house, though this is rare. She wears a beautiful kimono, and some say she wears a wedding outfit, but in either case she is turned away or concealing her face in her robe. However, from behind she appears to be a beautiful woman, and some men can't resist approaching to see her face. Exclaiming "Gya!" she reveals a white and ugly face, the bottom half splitting open to reveal a long range of teeth stained pitch black. The appearance of the face and her method of frightening people is very similar to the nopperabo.

- This page was last modified on 23 May 2008, at 18:24.

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Ohio's Helltown: Legends, Lies, and Lost Truths - Who Forted? Magazine

By Ken Summers on August 18, 2014

whofortedblog.com

Helltown Ohio

It was about 20 years ago that I was formally introduced to or indoctrinated into what you might today call the 'Helltown Experience'. One cool, late-summer night I somehow managed to tag along with my sister and a few other older high school students on a joyride through "Butane Town". Our guide that evening was three or four years my senior, one of the more popular guys in school who would pass me in the halls shouting, "Lima bean!" (For some reason, he decided that I "looked like a lima bean" and that became one of my strangest childhood nicknames.) I was a painfully shy, awkward freshman, so being invited for a backseat ride through our infamously creepy local ghost town both completely unexpected and the highlight of my year.

It was twilight when we reached the bottom of the winding road, passing the 'satanic church' with its eerie red basement glow and making a right turn on Stanford Road where the numerous tales were born. And so, our guide began telling the story of Butane Town, or Mutane Town, according to some folks. The name supposedly came from an accident involving a truck carrying fuel or a toxic waste dump or something along those lines. The toxic waste version resulted in rumors of mutated people hiding out in the woods (which is where the Mutane or Mutant Town names came into play).

Savacoal Barn, at the corner of Boston Mills & Stanford Roads, is one of many once-decaying structures that gave rise to stories of the 'slaughter house'.

We first passed the "slaughter house" on the corner with its blood-stained barn where more than pigs were said to have been massacred. Down the road further was the 'witch's house' which seemed far from deserted with its interior lights on and the blue glow of a television visible through the window. At this point, the driver slowed down as we came upon the infamous school bus permanently parked on the side of the road. Dark, grimy, and foreboding, the rusting bus was said to be the scene of a killing spree where at least a dozen children were hacked to death. None of us saw the famed bloody handprints in the windows, but we didn't get out to take a closer look.

As we approached the sharp turn at the hill, I scanned the dark, overgrown fields for the 'invisible cemetery' said to be visible only at night when the tombstones glowed, yet I saw nothing. But we were quickly approaching the highlight of the trip: the End of the World. As was the tradition of the time, the driver revved his engine and floored the gas pedal to reach the top of the hill. At its peak, the road appeared to vanish before us and the car was briefly airborne before slamming down on the steep downgrade on the other side. Before long, we passed the

'crazy house' and reached the end of our journey at Brandywine Falls.

Today, Stanford Road is closed between the "end of the world" and Brandywine Falls.

Today, the modern Helltown that people visit is just a shadow of its former creepy self. While the stories continue to grow and evolve, many of the landmarks have faded away. The abandoned bus was towed away years ago, and Stanford Road is closed to vehicles between the steepest hill and Brandywine Falls. The few houses remaining are ether occupied by residents or owned by the National Park Service; few abandoned buildings remain. Yet this doesn't stop autumn thrill-seekers from searching the area for robe-clad cult members and the infamous truck with one headlight. Perhaps this is partially due to the low-budget indie horror film *June 9* based on the Helltown legend and filmed in the area.

One of the most comprehensive online resources for the truth behind Helltown has been written by James Willis on his *Ghosts of Ohio* website, detailing the many legends as well as the history of the area. Originally, this was the town of Boston which sprang up on the Ohio & Erie Canal in the early 1800s, but it has origins much older than that. Aside from the many native tribes who found this place inviting, a French trading post was situated at this point during the late 17th century. Today, the area has been absorbed by the village of Boston Heights. Boston itself is no longer an actual town.

The old stone church in the former village of Boston is still in use today and looks identical to this 1975 photograph.

Many of the legends of Helltown are either complete fictitious fabrication or fanciful explanations for mundane things. Remember that red glow in the church basement? It was caused by candles in red glass holders on an altar. And the witch's house? It's marked by a concrete post with a 'W' on it—something any railroader will laugh at while he explains it's a stolen marker from the nearby tracks alerting engineers to blow their whistle. And the truck with one headlight was no phantom truck; it was a local homeowner trying to chase teenagers away from his private property.

But somewhere, tucked away behind the legends which sprang up from so many residents being evicted when the National Park Service claimed the town through eminent domain, there are truly mysterious incidents from Helltown which are rarely heard. Possibly the strangest is the story of Jim Brown, who was both a sheriff and a counterfeiter; after surviving being struck by lightning in a local tavern, Brown proclaimed that "even the Good Lord couldn't strike him down." Brown later died from a fall into a canal boat, but that's not the real mystery. Years of counterfeiting led to a fast fortune in gold dust; exactly what happened to over $200,000 in gold dust (today worth over $4.3 million) is still uncertain.

Boston Cemetery may have some wild legends of deadly benches and moving trees, but some accounts from early residents claim that the graveyard was built on a native burial mound. Stories insist that human bones and artifacts were simply discarded when graves were dug, which could very well have led to some angered spirits. On top of that, there is one park-owned house and another private residence

(which will soon be acquired by the National Park Service) where unexplained poltergeist activity has been reported by past renters. While I've been told of incidents at these structures by first-hand witnesses, I have never once heard of either building being mentioned in any of the dozens of variations on the urban legends attached to this town.

The lack of a backstory on both hauntings is somewhat perplexing, yet I am currently working on researching both locations for any possible explanation. The first building is a currently-vacant house on Stanford Road used for storage. The second is a larger structure on Boston Mills Road which was built after 1900 for one of the town's largest businesses. The latter building seems to possess the most activity; cabinets and doors have been both heard and observed slamming from an unknown force. There are plans to renovate and restore the structure in the near future, and the effect of these changes may prove interesting on the amount of activity encountered here.

Today's Helltown with its Crybaby Bridge (left) is far less spooky and more inviting for the millions of annual park visitors.

Although Helltown and its stories are still such popular parts of the mythos that is Ohio paranormal lore, the blossoming Cuyahoga Valley National Park has nearly erased all trace of the original 1970s atmosphere. Journeys similar my own high school experience are no longer a possibility; abandoned structures and quiet, desolate roads have been replaced by park-owned restored buildings and the constant traffic of hikers and cyclists. Yet while many of us lament the vanishing of the iconically-spooky (and abundantly fictional) Helltown, there are still many long-forgotten mysteries, weird tales, and unexplained happenings hiding behind freshly-painted doors and picturesque barns to allow for an evolution from urban legend to historically-creepy haunting ground.

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Group 'seeks Gandalf' for president

15 December 2014

bbc.com

Last updated at 11:24 ET

Sir Ian McKellen as Gandalf the wizard

Wizard hunting: The group wants someone with Gandalf-levels of wisdom to run for president

President Alexander Lukashenko has run Belarus virtually unchallenged for 20 years, but he may face a formidable opponent at next year's elections - a wizard like Gandalf.

"Gandalf for President!" is the campaign slogan of the Belarus, My Country opposition group, which has a 50,000-strong online following, Radio Liberty's Belarusian service reports. The organisers know the wizard from JRR Tolkien's Lord of the Rings and Hobbit novels doesn't qualify for election, so they're seeking a local candidate with similar qualities of wisdom and leadership. "It's a cushy job," they promise, adding that they've chosen the character because he's "a good wizard and a friend to the Hobbits, who as we know are like Belarusians" - an apparent reference to a study which suggested Belarus had a "Shire-like climate".

The group took its cue from the unsuccessful campaign by a "Darth Vader" presidential candidate in Ukraine, but the stakes are higher in authoritarian Belarus. Previous unsuccessful candidates Andrei Sannikau and Alyaksandr Milinkevich have faced arrest, persecution and imprisonment since daring to stand up to the long-serving leader. President Lukashenko is a close ally of Russia - a point not lost on the organisers, who quip that "Gandalfs" main task will be to "confront Mordor, which lies somewhere near Moscow".

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Isolated monks on island near Kodiak have boat stolen; nuns help find it

adn.com

Alaska Dispatch News
December 24, 2014

On Saturday, the Alaska State Troopers' Kodiak station received a report of an unusual theft: A 21-foot aluminum skiff dubbed the Archangel, used as a primary means of transport for a tiny community of Orthodox Christian monks living at an off-the-grid monastery on a forested island near Kodiak, had gone missing.

The handful of monks living at St. Archangel Michael Skete on Spruce Island -- across Narrow Strait from the northeast tip of Kodiak Island -- used the boat to get to and from their home. Occasionally, the boat brought pilgrims to the island, considered a holy site by Orthodox Christians because of its history as the home of St. Herman of Alaska.

The monk who contacted troopers said he initially thought the boat might have broken loose from a dock in stormy weather, said trooper Ryan Lott, who took the call.

But upon further inspection, he realized the lines to the boat weren't broken and 10 gallons of gasoline had gone missing from the dock as well.

"At this point I told him the boat was more than likely stolen," Lott said.

It's not uncommon for gear -- or even an outboard engine -- to go missing from a boat in the Kodiak area, Lott said. But this was the first time he'd dealt with the theft of a boat itself.

A clue emerged later in the day, when Lott heard that two Orthodox nuns living at St. Nilus Skete, an even smaller islet in the area, had observed the Archangel traveling with two people aboard the previous day. Both were wearing rain gear, according to the witnesses.

On Monday, the Archangel was spotted beached at Termination Point, a beach north of the city of Kodiak, Lott said.

The boat was intact, aside from about $750 in cosmetic damage, and was returned to its regular berth on Spruce Island, Lott said.

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This Mysterious Bridge Lures Dogs to Their Deaths

Mark Joseph Stern
Dec. 14 2014 10:05 PM

slate.com

Courtesy of Lairich Rig/Creative Commons

Overtoun Bridge near Dumbarton in Scotland.

*Atlas Obscura on **Slate** is a blog about the world's hidden wonders. Like us on Facebook and Tumblr, or follow us on Twitter.*

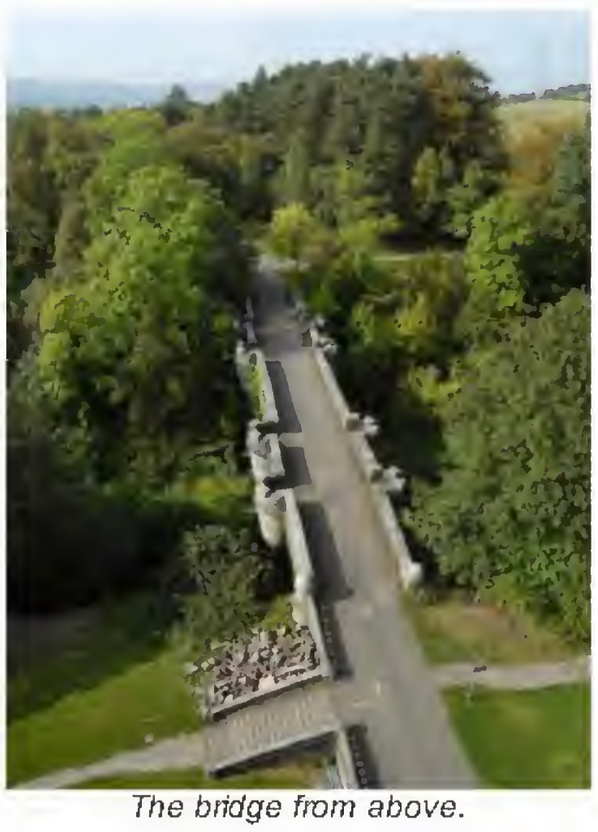
There is something about Overtoun Bridge that lures dogs to their deaths.

The Gothic stone structure, located near Dumbarton in Scotland, spans a narrow gorge on the grounds of a 19th-century manor. Since the 1960s, some 50 dogs have perished after leaping from the same spot on the bridge. Hundreds more have jumped but lived, some even returning for a second leap onto the jagged rocks 50 feet below.

These apparent canine suicides have baffled the poor dog owners unlucky enough to witness their dear pets jumping off the "dog suicide bridge." Conspiracy theories arose. Suspicions of supernatural forces grew. *Was there a disturbance in the magnetic field? Could the bridge be haunted?*

A horrific incident in October 1994 provoked further talk of possible paranormal activity: A 32-year-old man threw his 2-week-old son from the bridge because he believed him to be possessed by the devil. He then tried to jump off the parapet himself, but was pulled back by his terrified wife.

In 2005 the Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals enlisted canine psychologist Dr. David Sands and animal habitat expert David Sexton to investigate the bridge from a dog's-eye view. After taking in the sights, smells, and sounds of the Overtoun gorge—carefully leashed canines in tow—the pair concluded that it was likely the strong scent of mink that was luring dogs over the edge, dulling their other senses and preventing them from seeing the sheer drop until it was too late. It's not a definitive explanation, but it's a little more comforting than the idea of a haunted bridge that forces happy pets to commit suicide.



Courtesy of Lairich Rig/Creative Commons

The bridge from above.

Painting with the Dead: The use of human remains in paintings

By strangeremains*on*December 29, 2014 • (0)

Interior of a kitchen by Martin Drölling, Louvre, 1815. Image credit: Wikipedia

L'intérieur d'une cuisine (or "Interior of a Kitchen") by French artist Martin Drölling was completed in 1815 and exhibited at the Paris Salon Exhibition of 1817. This painting achieved such critical acclaim that it hung at the Palais du Luxembourg long after Drölling's death in 1817 and know hangs in the Louvre. This scene of domestic tranquility, however, hides a macabre secret- Drölling used a shade of paint called Mummy Brown.

Mummy Brown was a paint that was a deep brown that ranged in hue from burnt to raw umber. European artists and colour-makers (manufacturers of pigments) from the 16th to the 20th century mixed this pigment using white pitch, myrrh, and the ground up remains of Egyptian mummies and their mummified pets. Though art historians believe Drölling used the remains of French kings disinterred from the royal abbey of St. Denis in Paris, rather than ancient Egyptian remains.

Why did artists start using this macabre pigment in their paintings?

Archaeologists believe the use of human remains in paint was the result of a misidentification of embalming substances used by ancient Egyptians.

The word "mummy" is derived from the Persian and Arabic words "mum" or "mumya" that describes wax or bitumen. Bitumen is a petroleum-based goo that was found in the Mumya Mountain of Persia and has been used as an adhesive and sealant since ancient times. When Arabic people first encountered mummies they assumed that the black gunk that covered the corpses and bandages was bitumen so they called them "mumya" or "mummy." Though bitumen was used during the embalming process for a period of time on the Red Sea coast, oils and resins were more commonly applied to ancient Egyptian corpses. As the oils and resins aged they blackened causing the confusion that eventually led to the destruction of countless mummies over hundreds of years.

Throughout the medieval and Renaissance periods artists used bitumen as a pigment in color recipes to make paint. Because Europeans had been importing Egyptian mummies since the 16th century for medicinal purposes, artists believed they had a readily available source for bituminous pigments on mummies when bitumen became scarce. Mummified remains became so widely used by artists that art supply stores and colour-makers mass-produced the pigment and paint and it soon became known as Mummy Brown.

Mummy Brown eventually grew to be unpopular at the end of the 19th century because the technical qualities of the paint were considered to be subpar, authentic mummies became

more difficult to obtain, and most importantly people began to realize that making and using Mummy Brown exploited the dead and another culture's archaeological riches.

C Roberson and Co, a colour-maker and manufacturer of art supplies based in London, stopped selling the Mummy Brown some time in the 1960's but only because they ran out of the pigment's main ingredient. In 1964, C Roberson and Co's managing director at the time told Time Magazine, "We might have a few odd limbs lying around somewhere, but not enough to make anymore paint."

Today there are synthetic versions of Mummy Brown available, called mummy bauxite and *caput mortuum*.

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Paranormal Investigators Find Ghost of Racist Dog. We're Not Kidding. - Who Forted? Magazine

By Greg Newkirk on January 3, 2012

whofortedblog.com

The legendary 617 Squadron with their unfortunately named canine mascot. His name, is uh.. well...

Scampton, England based ghost hunting team Paranormal Lincs believe they have been in contact with the spirit of a legendary labrador with an, uh, unfortunate name.

PL recently spent two evenings investigating the Royal Air Force base in Scampton after rumors that a ghostly hound was, ahem, dogging the base staff. The phantom pooch was even spotted in photographs taken at the base since the 80's.

The canine in question belonged to Wing Commander Guy Gibson, and served as the mascot of the 617 squadron until he was hit by a car the day before the squadron's famous "Dam Busting" raid on May 17, 1943. The dog was buried on the grounds of the RAF base in Scampton, complete with a grave marker bearing the lab's name, a name which has definitely not aged very well: "Nigger".

Paul Drake, one of the 12 ghost hunters involved in the search, told ***This Is Linconshire*** that the team was "euphoric" over their discovery.

"I have done 63 investigations and it has been the most active one we have done with the equipment," he said. "We were euphoric. It was one of the best investigations we have done. The rest of the team and I were buzzing for two or three days."

The team were convinced of their find when they recorded what they called a "dog sized" cold spot on the wall of Gibson's old office, as well as phantom growls in their EVP recordings and "strange" equipment readings.

The burial place of, um.. uh.. the dog named.. uhh.. er...

Oh, and let's not forget the speech activated orbs.

"We took a lot of photos of orbs and a lot of them we could rule out because of dust. But when they appear when you ask them to, you start to ask questions."

The team is convinced that they've located the ghost of Gibson as well, but to be sure, they're planning an investigation to his favorite pub in hopes he may just show up. Judging by the name of Gibson's dog, this ghost may actually be one of the few wearing a white sheet.

I have a feeling that our incoming search terms are about to go to a very bad place.

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Pareidolia: A Bizarre Bug of the Human Mind Emerges in Computers

By Theodore R. Johnson
Aug 7 2012, 10:07 AM ET

theatlantic.com

Humans have a tendency to see faces where there are none. So do computers. Are they more like us in their flaws?

Wikimedia Commons

This rocky hill in Ebihens, France, is, well, just that -- a rocky hill in Ebihens, France. But to pretty much any human observer, the assemblage of meaningless angles takes on a familiar appearance, that of a human face in profile. It has a distinct nose, eyes, lips, and chin, capped off with some foliage as hair. From the perspective pictured above, it's impossible not to see a man in a mountain.

This is an example of a phenomenon known as pareidolia, the human tendency to read significance into random or vague stimuli (both visual and auditory). The term comes from the Greek words "para" (παρά), meaning beside or beyond, and "eidolon" (εἴδωλον), meaning form or image. Though animals or plants can "appear" in clouds and human speech can do the same in static noise, the appearance of a face where there is none is perhaps the most common variant of pareidolia (this includes the subgenre of spotting Jesus or Mary in anything from toast to a crab).

Pareidolia was once thought of as a symptom of psychosis, but is now recognized as a normal, human tendency. Carl Sagan theorized that hyper facial perception stems from an evolutionary need to recognize -- often quickly -- faces. He wrote in his 1995 book, *The Demon-Haunted World*, "As soon as the infant can see, it recognizes faces, and we now know that this skill is hardwired in our brains. Those infants who a million years ago were unable to recognize a face smiled back less, were less likely to win the hearts of their parents, and less likely to prosper."

Humans are not alone in their quest to "see" human faces in the sea of visual cues that surrounds them. For decades, scientists have been training computers to do the same. And, like humans, computers display pareidolia.

Though there is something basely human about the tendency to see faces in the non-human shapes around us, to anthropomorphize odd pieces of hardware or rocks on a hillside, that computers see humans where there are none should not be all too surprising. Facial-recognition software is a tough technological feat, and in the process, computers are bound to come up with false positives. Does this make the computers more like us? Have they taken on our most human cognitive errors? In a superficial sense, yes, computers do make errors that are similar to pareidolia, and this seems very human. But as you look into these computer false-positives a bit more, you find a different story.

In an awesome little creative trick, New York University researcher Greg Borenstein applied open-source software FaceTracker to a Flickr pool of examples called Hello Little Fella. In some instances, FaceTracker found a face just where you or I would:

Like a human, the computer has found a false-positive. That humans and computers share some instances of pareidolia seems to underscore the human-like nature of those computers, brought about by their human-led training. In that sense, a computers' errors make the computers seem somehow

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more human.

But maybe the reason a computer "sees" a face in that key is very simple: Things around us do sometimes actually have the shapes that constitute a face. How can we say this is pareidolia, a strange phenomenon that is supposedly the byproduct of millions of years of evolution, and not just the basic truth that sometimes shapes do look like things they are not?

A project from Phil McCarthy called Pareidoloop pushes us to think about these questions. By combining random-polygon-generation software and facial-recognition software, McCarthy's program builds its own series of randomly generated faces. Out of layers upon layers of mish-mashed shapes, the software "recognizes" the faces, and the fine tunes them into human likenesses. (McCarthy notes that a lot of them kind of resemble old pictures of Einstein.)

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The computer is "seeing" faces where there are just random shapes! But wouldn't anyone? The results are clearly faces, so much so that recognizing them as such cannot be labeled pareidolia any more so than recognizing faces in a painting of a face is pareidolia. Where is that line? If it's pareidolia to see a face in the two windows and door of a house, why not in a sketch of two eyes and a nose? Faces are, after all, just a series of well arranged polygons. We'll see them in the world around us because sometimes, inevitably, shapes will be arranged in the formation of two eyes, a nose, and a mouth. How can we identify pareidolia in a way that is distinct from the "accurate" identification of an artistic representation of a face? How can we say pareidolia is a phenomenon of the human mind at all?

Borenstein's work with computers provides a way out of this, answering a most human question by looking at the idiosyncrasies of algorithms. He writes:

> Facial recognition techniques give computers their own flavor of pareidolia. In addition to responding to actual human faces, facial recognition systems, just like the human vision system, sometimes produce false positives, latching onto some set of features in the image as matching their model of a face. Rather than the millions of years of evolution that shapes human vision, their pareidolia is based on the details of their algorithms and the vicissitudes of the training data they've been exposed to.
>
> Their pareidolia is different from ours. Different things trigger it.

In Borenstein's sample, FaceTracker found faces in only seven percent of the images, meaning that

even though the program did display this human tendency, it did so at a rate much lower than the human judges who created the Flickr pool. That said, we do not know how many false positives the program would spot in the world around us that humans didn't include in the pool, though we get a sense from the "mistakes" the program made, sometimes missing the obvious "face" and spotting another. Such mistakes are useful for seeing just how particularly human pareidolia is in the first place. Here's an example:

6691021373_27c46b2a82.jpg

The computer's false-positive is, as any human could tell you, wrong -- the *wrong* wrong answer, selecting B where a human would say A, and the answer is actually D, for none of the above. The mistakes of a computer are so other, so less-than-human, that we can see that pareidolia is not the recognition of just any old assemblage of eyes, nose, and a mouth, but specific ones, ones that must come from within the human observer, that are not inherently available in the shapes as they appear in the world.

And it shows us something more. Although a computer may, like a human, find false positives in the world around it, its sensibility for what makes a set of polygons a face is still, somehow, off. On its surface, a computer's a tendency to pareidolia, this very human phenomenon, seems human-like. In a strange echo of the tendency to see human faces in random shapes, we see our reflection in a machine's cognition -- a sort of pareidolia of the mind. We look at a computer's pareidolia and think, We make those very same mistakes!

But, in fact, we don't. The mistakes are different. A computer's flaws are still very machine -- and ours are very human.

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The Man in Black: Pennsylvania's Flood Visitor - Who Forted? Magazine

By Ken Summers on January 30, 2014

whofortedblog.com

AustinDam_MIB

Overshadowed and forgotten by the more disastrous Johnstown Flood of 1889, the Austin Dam Flood—dubbed the "Austin Horror" in newspapers—was a great tragedy which cost the lives of at least 78 people. Yet perhaps such a high death toll could have been prevented. A mysterious figure stalked the town for the year before the September 30, 1911, flood. Was it just a ghost or a warning left unheeded?

In January before the dam collapsed, another flood of a lesser scale happened in Austin, Pennsylvania. The force of the water caused the dam across Freeman Run to move a few inches downstream, causing a panic among the citizens. Built in 1909, the dam was used by the Bayless Pulp & Paper Mill to power the facility. Though the company had planned on building a 30-foot-thick concrete dam, it settled on a cheaper 20 feet of thickness. But it didn't take long for them to realize their decision was a mistake. The dam bowed out 36 feet under the weight of water within the first months of its construction and cracks kept forming.

Bayless Dam, already cracking, before the 1911 flood.

But when the whole dam moved during that January flood, the townspeople weren't waiting around to see what would happen next. Residents fled to higher land in the surrounding hills, waiting nervously in the pouring rain to see if their homes would be swept away in a great torrent. The dam managed to hold that time, but there was something else that made the residents nervous about returning home. The Buffalo & Susquehanna Railroad yard had a strange visitor lurking in the shadows.

The rail line was first built for hauling lumber in 1885 as the Sinnemahoning Valley Railroad (formed by Frank Goodyear), but became a branch of the B&S during a merger of several railroads in 1893. The railroad shops (where maintenance and repairs take place) in Austin burned down on two occasions: once in 1901 and again in 1906, destroying one of the

The Buffalo & Susquehanna Railroad depot in Austin, Pa.

Goodyear Lumber Company stores. While that seems a likely time for a ghost story to start circulating the town, it was another 4 years before the strange man started to appear.

GHOST STORY FROM AUSTIN

The Honesdale Citizen article about the "ghost" sightings.

Though residents called it a ghost, there's no indication that the strange figure was some translucent wraith, moaning and rattling chains and haunting the living. Actually, it was described as being "a very tall man... dressed in black that would appear and disappear mysteriously". Railroad workers were frightened by its "queer and spooky actions" which included riding inside the passenger cars, lurking about the tracks, and "crawling between and running over the cars".

A tall man dressed entirely in black. Either Slender Man liked trains or could this shadowy, weirdly-acting "person" have been one of the legendary Men in Black? While we often think of the MIB as being threatening figures trying to silence alien abductees or policing extraterrestrials in snazzy black cars, there have been many reports of them performing odd activities or being pranksters. Most notably, they act very strangely and seem puzzled by the simplest of objects.

The sightings came to an end around the time of the September 30th flood. The Bayless Dam gave away, destroying the mill and most of the town of Austin. People were killed as far downstream as Costello. Debris, railroad equipment, houses, and automobile tires littered the valley. And while the official count of the dead stopped at 78, some speculate that at least 88 people died in total. You might think that was the end of the disasters for Austin, but it happened one more time in 1943.

A panoramic view of the flood damage. (Library of Congress)

Following the 1911 flood, residents were in such shock and too busy trying to recover their losses to mention the strange black-clad figure to reporters. It wasn't until the one-year anniversary of the flood that a reporter for the *Honesdale Citizen* wrote up an article about it for the October 9th issue. And as mysteriously as he came, the story of the man in black once more faded into obscurity.

Many people believe that sightings of the Mothman near Point Pleasant, West Virginia, were warnings about the collapse of the Silver Bridge across the Ohio River. Could the same be true of this mysterious "man in black"? What happened to the strange man in black around the time of the flood? Was he swept away, tired of haunting Austin, or did he turn into Mothman and fly away to West Virginia? Remnants of the mill still can be seen at what is now Austin Dam Memorial Park. Oh yeah... and there are rumors of buried money still left in the area, too.

The ruins of Bayless Dam as they appear today.

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Aspects of Perchta

Lady of the Wilderness

Perchta is referred to as wild, which originally had a meaning of "belonging to the forest". Unlike Frau Holda, she isn't particularly associated with one mountain; she is a creature of all groves and glens, although she's also sometimes said to dwell in a cave. She is never mentioned living in a village or a "cultured" part of the surrounding area (cornfields, etc.). (The Winter Goddess: Percht, Holda, and Related Figures, Lotte Motz)

Belly-Slitter/Initiatory Aspects

One of the common motifs around Perchta is that of the belly slitter, punishing people who betrayed cultural norms. Motz notes that Perchta seems to have aspects of an educator and she wonders (I as well) if these themes weren't originally related to an initiation of some sort.

Motz notes "Stories of the education of the young by a superhuman being, especially if it takes place in the wilderness, bring to mind the practices of puberty initiation of primitive societies. In these, separation from parental dwellings and experiences inflicted by superhuman forces are essential for the spiritual second birth and for gaining an adult status. ... The recurrent tale of Perchta's opening and refilling of human stomachs appears to be an initiatory motif. ... The refilling of a body with a new substances obviously takes place only in initiatory dreams ... Mutilated men and men whose bodies have been cut so that their intestines trail behind are noted in descriptions of the wild host which is so frequently headed by the goddess." Maybe these mutilated individuals are supposed to represent those who somehow failed initiation.

It seems that for women, Perchta's initiatory roles would be centered around spinning, and for men, it would be involved in the perchten processions – at first becoming personifications of wild entities, and later appearing in the costume of the region, representing the state of young adulthood they were aspiring to.

Interestingly enough, there is a similar incident in *Laxdaela saga*, in which a character experiences a vision where a woman comes to him, cuts him open, and replaces his innards with brushwood. The woman turns out to be his guardian idis and did this as protection; the next day he is mortally wounded in battle and thought to be dead. However, he's fine the morning after that, and says that the woman came back to him in the night and put his entrails back.

Dual-Sided

The word Perchta appears to have come from an adjective meaning "bright" or "glorious" (Perchta the Belly Slitter and her Kin, John Smith). The Germanic origin of her name and the fact that the meaning is positive point towards Perchta being an indigenous figure and a well-

liked one, at that. Perchta seems to have very much a dual nature – she is alternately described as kind or violent, and physically as gray, wizened, old, and ugly or a tall and beautiful young woman, veiled and clothed in white. The more "negative" aspects of her character were possibly exaggerated in Christian times and by Christian authors looking to discredit an obviously pagan figure. Often, her "long" or "iron" nose was spoke of – Motz wonders if this is left over from an association with a bird of prey.

The medieval church spoke of "sinners" who leave food for Perchta in the "night of Perchta" to obtain prosperity and well being in the coming year, as well as asking people to believe no longer in "frawen percht", and complaining of locals who would rather chant of "domina **Perchta**" than say their prayers to the Virgin Mary. (Motz) This not only greatly diminishes the possibility that Perchta was created by the medieval church as a way of keeping people in line (as Smith proposes in his essay), but makes it appear as though Perchta was a figure of adoration in many areas. Another testament of this would be her folk rituals surviving to this day. Additionally, a church canon in the ninth century condemns women who say that they rode out with a crowd of nocturnal demons (Motz) – could these be perchten? Grimm also notes Frau Berchta being spoken of in the 10th century.

Things Related to Her

Perchta is very well documented as being associated with the spindle and with spinning. When the shepherds brought flax to her in the summer, she blessed their flocks, and they often claimed to see her walking along the steepest slopes around twilight, with a golden spindle in her hand. (Smith) The spindle is associated with several goddesses and entities in the continental Germanic countries, and is strongly associated with fate and fortune. (source) She was also associated with getting the spinning done on time – if you didn't get it done on time, Perchta might say you'd have bad luck in the next year, or even cut open your stomach and refill it with rubbish! Through the spindle, Perchta may be connected to the female mysteries – Motz notes that the places where girls gather to spin can become the site of enactment of these mysteries, and that instruction in spinning belongs with the tradition of girls' puberty initiations.

She is associated with the Wild Hunt in folklore, said to be the one leading it – this is not uncommon with Germanic or Northern European goddesses, as Frau Holda, Freyja, and Frigga have all been said to lead the Wild Hunt, depending on the locale. The Wild Hunt was a phenomenon occurring in the winter months that was supposed to be dangerous to humans; being in the path of it could be deadly. Gundarsson's essay is a great resource for folklore on the Hunt.

As far as the time of the year in which Perchta plays the largest role, there's no doubt it's the winter season, specifically the end of December and beginning of January. This is when her feasts and traditional processions are held. She is particularly associated with Epiphany, starting the night of January 5th and going on to January 6th. There is some evidence that this holiday was referred to as "perchtentag" (bright day, Perchta's day, or Perchten's day) before the conversion and it often was referred to as such afterwards as well.

She is said several times to have a train of unbaptized children following her, and is associated with children despite not having any children herself. Motz supposes that the souls of unbaptized children following Perchta is a Christian explanation for her strong alliance with a group of children not her own. I wonder if there might have been similar tales in heathen times, but for children roughly corresponding to unbaptized Christian children – children who had died before being accepted into the community or who were exposed to the elements.

In "Percht and the Prying Farmhand", a farmer's wife and her helpers prepared the best room of their house for a visit of Percht and her train of unbaptised children. (Smith) Another story relates a poor cottager who, going out at night in search of a godfather for a new addition to his family, finds Perchta and her train of children – he sees one wearing nothing but an undergarment and cries "Oh, you poor Zodawascherl!" (unfortunately, I have no idea what this name means!). Perchta told the man that since he had named the child, good fortune would be his, and then vanished along with her children. The cottager found a rich sponsor soon afterwards. (Smith) I find this story particularly interesting because it shows Perchta as a giver of wealth, and I also wonder if she had some connection to naming at some point, since names were and are considered powerful things. It also seems vaguely reminiscent of the myth of Odin, Frigga, and the langobards, although I'm not sure what conclusion could be reached from that slight connection.

The milk that was put out for Perchta and her entourage was fed to poultry and to cattle to give them vigor & fertility in the coming year, strengthening Perchta's connections with abundance. Her connection to abundance may be through food specifically, as food offerings for her were common and sometimes food was eaten in her honor.

As mentioned above, Motz thinks that the descriptions of Perchta as "long nosed" or "iron nosed" are leftover from her association with birds of prey. She is particularly associated with animals of the chase, through the Wild Hunt – we have accounts of dogs following her carriage or participating in the Wild Hunt. Other possible associations include wolves and goats. I would argue that most forest animals, particularly nocturnal ones, could be associated with Perchta, and I personally strongly associate her with barn owls and wolves in particular (see below).

Related Entities

The Perchten

> "The Perchtenlauf was earlier usual on the last Fasching-evening. It was a kind of masked procession. The masked ones were called Perchten. They were divided into beautiful and ugly.... The beautiful Perchten often distributed gifts. So went it loudly and joyfully, if the wild Perchte herself did not come among them. If this spirit mixed among them, the game was dangerous. One could recognize the presence of the wild Perchte when the Perchten raged all wild and furious and sprang over the well-stock. In this case the Perchten ran swiftly away from each other in fear and tried to reach the nearest, best house. For as soon as one was under a roof, the Wild One could not have them any longer. Otherwise she would

> tear apart anyone, who she could get possession of. Even today, one can see places where the Perchten torn apart by the wild Perchte lie buried."
> (Sitten, Bräuuche, und Meinungen des Tiroler Volkes, in Höfler, p. 59), from here

The Perchten are one of the most interesting things about Perchta, to me. These traditions extend to the present day, especially in rural areas (try searching for "perchten" on flickr!). In short, locals (traditionally young men, although I don't know if this has changed in recent years) will dress up as hideous monsters and parade through the village. In several places, they appear in double form – earlier in the holiday in their hideous form, and later in the "handsome" form (which usually consists of local traditional attire).

The Vanir

Although there is no stated association with the Vanir in any of the information we have on Perchta, a connection could very well be argued. Perchta is connected to specific aspects of the land (forests and "uncultivated" areas), she can bestow abundance (especially on livestock), and sometimes left gifts that turned into gold. She is also possibly connected to the alfar (see below). All of these are rather Vanic characteristics. Then there is the Perchten processions; processions in general seemed to be a Vanic tradition historically (both Nerthus and Freyr were connected to wain processions).

Elves/Alfar

Again, there is no historical connection between Perchta and the elves that is explicitly stated. However, her name means "bright" and she sometimes appears clothed in white, which is reminiscent of the light elves of Scandinavian mythology. Gifts that appear worthless and then turn into gold are a common motif in faery lore, and these frequently appear in stories about Perchta. She is also associated with "in between" times and places, and elves/faeries are associated with mounds – a portal between this world and the other.

Perchta and Frau Holda

Many assume that Perchta and Frau Holda are the same goddess, just with different names. This seems to have started with Grimm noting that the areas in which Perchta was worshiped were exactly the ones where Frau Holda didn't appear (which, of course, is not conclusive evidence in and of itself). I don't agree with his assumption, but I do feel they're closely related – something akin to sisters. Interestingly enough, in the Urglaawe (Pennsylvania Dutch heathenism) tradition, Holda & Perchta are viewed as sisters.

There is some evidence that could be said to back up the idea that Frau Holda and Perchta are different entities. They have a very different feel to me, and I've spoken to several others who agree. Frau Holda was not connected with the Perchten, she didn't have the "belly slitting" aspects that are associated with Pechta, and there is not an emphasis on Holda having a "light" form (a beautiful young woman) and a "dark" form (a hideous old hag). Nor is Perchta as connected with domestic activities or witchcraft as Frau Holda is. In the end, it is up to the reader to decide for themselves, based on their experiences.

Walburga

Walburga is the possible name of another Germanic goddess, later turned into a saint. She, like Perchta, is associated with spinning and the spindle. Also like Perchta, she is associated with the Wild Hunt – though she is chased by it, not leading it. You can read more about Walburga here.

St. Lucia's Day

St. Lucy is a Christian saint who is celebrated on St. Lucia's Day, December 13th. Sweden is the country most strongly associated with the day, but it's also celebrated in Norway, Denmark, Iceland, Latvia, Estonia, Finland, and other countries. Celebrations on St. Lucia's Day include a procession headed by a girl wearing a white gown with a red sash and crown of lights or candles, followed by other girls carrying candles. The original legend of St. Lucy (which can be seen here) doesn't seem related to Germanic paganism, but St. Lucia's Day seems to be grafted onto an earlier, pre-Christian holiday. Although it doesn't list a source, the Wikipedia article for St. Lucia's Day says that *Lussinatta* was observed on December 13th (by the unreformed Julian calendar, which would make it coinciding with the solstice). The days between Lussinatta and Yule were considered dangerous; Lussi and her followers, collectively called *Lussiferda*, would ride through the air at night (rather reminiscent of the Wild Hunt). I can't say for sure if there's any connection between these events and Perchta at all, but it makes for interesting reading!

Recommended Reading

Perchta is mentioned in Teutonic Mythology by Grimm, and is (among several other figures) the focus of Lotte Motz's essay "The Winter Goddess: Percht, Holda, and Related Figures" (obtainable through JSTOR). Motz takes the viewpoint that Perchta and Holda, among others, were different forms of one single "Lady of the Beasts" winter goddess, which isn't something I agree with, but there's a lot of good information in the essay. There is a brief section on Perchta and Holda in Teutonic Religion by Gundarsson, which also takes the viewpoint that they are the same goddess. Another essay available on JSTOR, "Perchta the Belly-Slitter and Her Kin" by John Smith, has some good tidbits of information but I found the author's attitude and writing style not to my taste and his conclusion (that Perchta was created by the medieval church to keep the populace in line) faulty. I wouldn't recommend it unless you're really looking for any little bits of information you can find, as the majority of the information he uses is also in Motz's essay. Other than that, I am unaware of any other sources of information on Perchta.

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FRIDAY, 19 DECEMBER 2014 by **Dr Karl Shuker**

http://nblo.gs/128MPW

PERUSING THE PACARANA - A TERRIER-SIZED 'TERRIBLE MOUSE'

A captive pacarana (public domain)

There are over 2,200 species of modern-day rodent currently known to science, but only a handful are so radically different from all others that they have been assigned an entire taxonomic family all to themselves. However, the extraordinary – and exceptionally large - rodent documented here (and which also happens to be one of my favourite mammals) has indeed received that rare accolade. Moreover, as will now be revealed, the history of its scientific discovery - and rediscovery - is just as remarkable as it is.

The year 1904 was a momentous year for mice, for it marked the rediscovery of a truly astonishing and extremely mysterious, controversial rodent that science had dubbed 'the terrible mouse', due to the fact that it was as large as a fox terrier!

Needless to say, any mouse the size of a small dog is no ordinary mouse, and in truth this species is not a bona fide mouse at all. If anything, it more closely resembles a long-tailed, spineless porcupine in general shape, and sports a handsome grey-black pelage decorated with longitudinal rows of white spots, which compares well with that of the South American common paca or spotted cavy *Cuniculus paca*, which is a fairly large relative of the guinea pig (but *not* the world's third largest rodent, as certain websites erroneously claim).

Common pacas (© HumedoTepezc/Wikipedia)

Indeed, in its native Andean homeland, the 'terrible mouse' is known locally as the pacarana ('false paca'). Yet it is neither paca nor porcupine either. Instead, as noted above, it is sufficiently removed from all living rodents to require its very own taxonomic family, Dinomyidae, thereby making it one of the most important mammalian discoveries of the past 150 years - not to mention one of the most elusive. Several prehistoric relatives of the pacarana have subsequently been described from fossil remains, and some of these were quite enormous in size (one, *Josephoartigasia monesi*, which lived 4-2 million years ago during the Pliocene and early Pleistocene epochs, was the size of a bison and is the largest rodent presently known to have existed). However, no other living dinomyids have been discovered, thus making the pacarana the very last representative of its entire lineage.

***Josephoartigasia monesi* reconstruction inspired by the pacarana (© Nobu Tamura/Wikipedia)**

Measuring up to 100 cm long and weighing as much as 15 kg, the pacarana is the world's third largest living rodent (exceeded only by the capybaras and beavers – but *not* by the paca, see above), and was discovered in 1873 by Prof. Constantin Jelski, curator of Poland's Cracow Museum. Financed by Polish nobleman Count Constantin Branicki, Jelski was engaged in zoological explorations in Peru when, one morning at daybreak, he observed an extremely large but wholly unfamiliar rodent. It had very long whiskers and a fairly lengthy tail, and was wandering through an orchard in the garden of Amablo Mari's hacienda near Vitoc, in the eastern Peruvian Andes. He swiftly dispatched the poor creature, and sent its skin and most of its skeleton back to Warsaw, where it gained the attention of Prof. Wilhelm Peters, Berlin Zoo's director, who meticulously studied its anatomy. Recognising that this huge rodent represented a dramatically new species, by the end of 1873 he had published a scientific description of it, in which he named it *Dinomys branickii* - 'Branicki's terrible mouse'. The pacarana had made its scientific debut.

19th-Century engraving of the pacarana specimen encountered by Jelski

Peters's studies disclosed that its anatomy was a bewildering amalgamation of features drawn from several quite different rodent families. In terms of its pelage and limb structure, it compared well with the paca, but unlike the five-toed (pentadactyl) configuration of the latter's paws the pacarana's each possessed just four toes. Many of its cranial and skeletal features (not to mention its long, hairy tail) also set it well apart from the paca, especially the flattened shape of the front section of its sternum (breast bone), and the development of its clavicles (collar bones).

19th-Century engraving of the common paca for comparison purposes with the previous engraving of a pacarana

Certain less conspicuous features of its anatomy were reminiscent of the capybara, but various others (including the shape of its molar teeth) corresponded most closely with those of the chinchillas. There were also some additional characteristics that seemed to ally it with the West Indies' coypu-like hutias. Little wonder then that Peters elected to create a completely separate taxonomic family for it!

The pacarana was clearly a major find - yet no sooner had it been discovered than it vanished. For three decades nothing more was heard of this 'false paca', and zoologists worldwide feared that it was extinct.

Dr Emil Goeldi (public domain)

Then in May 1904, Dr Emilio Goeldi (1959-1917), director of Brazil'sPara (now Belem) Museum, received a cage containing two living pacaranas (an adult female and a subadult male). These precious animals had been sent from the upper Rio Purus, Brazil, and proved to be extremely docile, inoffensive creatures, totally belying their 'terrible mouse' image. They were swiftly transferred to Brazil's Zoological Gardens, but tragically the adult female died shortly afterwards, following the birth of the first of two offspring that she was carrying.

Rare, early 20th Century photograph of a captive pacarana

In 1919, a more unusual-than-normal pacarana was described by Alipio de Miranda Ribeiro. Instead of being greyish-black in colour, it was brown, so Ribeiro designated it as the type specimen of a new species, christened *D. pacarana*. Three years earlier, the first pacarana recorded from Colombia had been collected (near La Candela, Huila); in 1921, this became the type of a third species, *D. gigas*. During the early 1920s, a series of pacaranas was procured by Edmund Heller from localities inPeru and also Brazil, so that by the 1930s a number of museum specimens existed, which were then examined carefully by Dr Colin Sanborn in the most detailed pacarana study undertaken at that time. Publishing his findings in 1931, he revealed that *D. pacarana* and *D. gigas* were nothing more than

varieties of *D. branickii*, which meant that only a single species existed after all.

Brown-furred (or faded black-furred?) taxiderm pacarana specimen at the Berlin Natural History Museum (© Markus Bühler)

A rarely-glimpsed, nocturnal inhabitant of mountain forests, the pacarana feeds on leaves, fruit, and grass, usually associates in groups of four and five, and is hunted as a source of food by its Indian neighbours, but little else is known about its lifestyle in the wild state. It is currently classed as a vulnerable species by the IUCN, yet as a result of its secretive habits and relatively inconspicuous habitat it may be more abundant than hitherto suspected (nowadays it is known to be fairly common, for instance, in Bolivia's Cotapata National Park).

Taxiderm pacarana at Tring Natural History Museum, Hertfordshire, England (© Dr Karl Shuker)

Due to this species' notoriously elusive nature, however, down through the years zoos have prized pacaranas almost as much as giant pandas - which is why early 1947 was a singularly memorable time for Philadelphia Zoo. It was then that it received an innocuous-looking crate from legendary animal dealer Warren Buck of Camden, New Jersey, with the laconic remark: "Here's a new one on me. Maybe you know what it is". When the crate was opened, to everyone astonishment it contained a living pacarana! And just like Goeldi's twosome, it proved to be delightfully tame and affectionate, showing no inclination to bite, and liking nothing better than to greet its visitors with a cheerful grunt and to sit upright on its hindlegs crunching a potato or carrot gripped firmly between its forepaws.

Of the handful of captive pacaranas obtained more recently and exhibited at such zoos as Zurich (the first to breed them), Basle, and San Diego (where I was fortunate enough to see my first live pacaranas in 2004), most have been of similarly pacific temperament. Indeed, they actively seek out their human visitors to nuzzle them and rub themselves against their legs almost like cats, or even to be picked up and carried just like playful puppies - truly a species with no desire whatsoever to live up to its formidable *Dinomys* designation!

Pacarana depicted on a postage stamp issued by Equatorial Guinea

Finally: Demonstrating that not only the pacarana but also the true pacas may well have some extra-large surprises in store for science is an exciting recent discovery made in Brazil by Dutch zoologist Dr Marc van Roosmalen. There are three currently-recognised species of true paca. Namely: the above-mentioned common paca *C. paca*; the smaller, longer-furred, and less-familiar mountain paca *C. taczanowskii*; and Hernandez's mountain paca *C. hernandezi*, described and named as recently as 2010 after mitochondrial DNA analyses confirmed its separate taxonomic status from the mountain paca. These are almost-tailless rodents normally no more than 60 cm long (often less), averaging 7 kg in weight, and adorned with usually four longitudinal rows of white spots on each side of their blackish-brown-furred body

Mountain paca (© WebmasterRioblanco/Wikipedia)

However, just a few years ago, Marc encountered – and collected – inBrazil a much larger form of true paca, known locally as the *paca concha*. It appears to have a very wide distribution range, and is distinguished from the two recognised species by its greater size (weighing up to 13 kg), its lighter fur colour, and the merging of most of its spots into longitudinal lines.

The holotype of the currently-undescribed giant paca (© Dr Marc van Roosmalen)

In a scientific paper currently awaiting publication, Marc has named this extra-large form as a new species. Several suspected specimens of giant paca are held at Brazil's Museu Paraense Emilio Goeldi, where Marc's holotype of this potential new species, killed for food by a local hunter on 28 May 2006 near Tucunaré, has been deposited. So perhaps Count Branicki's false paca now has a rival among the real pacas in terms both of physical stature and of complete surprise to the zoological community, thanks to its unexpected discovery.

This ShukerNature post is an expanded version of my pacarana account in my ***Encyclopaedia of New and Rediscovered Animals***.

Grandfather Mountain sands above Blowing Rock Highway near Linville. The mountain gets its name from the mountain's profile, which resembles the head of a bearded old man laying down in sleep. The unique and gorgeous natural environment around Grandfather has long been a draw for visitors to the North Carolina mountains. Grandfather Mountain was operated as a private tourist attraction for many years until 2011, when it was purchased by the State of North Carolina and is now a publicly-owned nature preserve.

The mountain has been a source of inspiration to many, including Shepherd M. Dugger, who praises its beauty in extremely flowery language in his highly odd combination of historical romance and travel guide *The Balsam Groves of Grandfather Mountain*. Originally published in 1907, Dugger's book often cited as some of the finest bad writing ever produced by a North Carolina author. But as bad as his prose may be, Dugger is not alone in finding beauty in the woods and trails of grandfather mountain.

Hiking is one of the prime attractions that brings people to the park. The park's eleven trails cover miles of terrain, and the more difficut backcountry trails take hikers through unique ecosystems that are home to dozens of rare and endangered species. It's on one of these trails that something even more rare has been seen, the ghost of a lost hiker.

The phantom hiker of Grandfather Mountain is said to be an older man, bearded, with a rough and grizzled appearance. He can be distinguished from a living hiker by the lack of Neoprene and Gore-Tex in his wardrobe. Instead, he's said to wear old-fashioned workman's clothes that look like they're from somewhere in the middle of the Twentieth Century. He wears a rough canvas army backpack and carries a long walking stick.

The phantom hiker is said to appear mostly as the evening is settling in, when most of the day hikers have left or are working their way back. He never says anything, and will never acknowledge any greeting. He simply appears walking along one of the trails in the backcountry, moves swiftly ahead of anyone else he encounters, and then simply vanishes.

No one knows who this mysterious figure is. Some have suggested that he was a hiker who became lost in the the thick woods around the mountain, and fell or was injured and was unable to make his way back out. Others have said he's just the

spirit of a man who loved the mountain so much that he chose to stay there after he died.

This ghostly hiker seems to do no harm. He seems to want little to do with people in general. He only seems to be there, like all the other visitors, to enjoy the natural wonder of Grandfather Mountain.

How to Get There

Grandfather Mountain nature preserve is located two miles north of Linville on US 221 near Blue Ridge Parkway at Milepost 305. The admission price covers access to all the hiking trails, exhibits, and the famous mile-high swinging bridge.

The phantom hiker is said to appear on the backcountry trails around Grandfather Mountain

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Photographer Spotted Groups of UFO Drifting Over Arizona

By Jenalyn Villamarin | November 22, 2012 10:07 AM EST

ibtimes.com

On November 15, 2012, a nameless male photographer posted on the website his encounter of three groups of UFOs drifting over the hills near Gila Bend, Arizona. The photographer took five images of the bright red and round-shaped group of unidentified flying objects in an arrowhead group formation.

"I am an outdoor photographer. I shoot the sky all the time so I know what I'm looking at. Most of the time, I can identify anything in the sky. But this time, I cannot explain exactly what I saw," the photographer stated in the website azfamily.com. The captured images were also uploaded to the website UFO Sightings Daily on November 16, 2012.

The photographer explained that he was at Gila Bend, Arizona conducting a sunset photo shoot. "I was concentrating on shooting the sunset. Suddenly, my eye caught a strange object flying over the hills. I turned my Nikon d7000 camera to capture the object. The camera uses a 105mm lens on a tripod and I managed to shoot five pictures," he shared.

Minutes later, the photographer noticed two more groups of UFOs that suddenly appeared. In one of the images, he managed to get the three UFO groups gathered together as they floated over the hills. With his experience in taking pictures, the photographer had to use the long exposure because it was already getting dark.

"It is not really close to my location. My estimation is that the objects were about 20 miles away from my position. They were moving erratically. I was having a hard time capturing them because they were only visible when they lighted up with multiple lights for four to five second at a time. When the light went out, I couldn't see them clearly," the photographer further revealed.

The UFOs swiftly vanished while the photographer was still figuring out what he just saw. "The last time I saw them, they appeared to bank out to the west and instantly disappear from my sight. I am still amazed with what I saw at that time. I even came back to the same location the next day but failed to see them again," he admitted.

Gila Bend is a small town founded in 1872. The place has become one of the more popular locations for UFO sightings. In the last 5 years, close to 12 UFO sightings have already been recorded from the area. Most of the objects are light-rounded shapes similar to this recent sighting. The town's population of approximately 2,000 people takes pride in these extraordinary encounters. Several buildings in this small town are even adorned with space and other bizarre themes in order to draw the attention of tourists or UFO enthusiasts.

To contact the editor, e-mail: editor@ibtimes.com

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PHOTOS: Police tase chocolate-crazed monkey after 'bedlam' at elementary school

kdvr.com

MARSEILLE, France — Police were forced to tase an aggressive monkey this week after the animal reportedly "caused bedlam," attacking students at an elementary school.

The monkey had apparently been living in the Castellanne neighborhood for some weeks, according to UPI. It had been living on scraps it found in the streets, as well as Kinder chocolates given to it by schoolchildren.

After multiple reports of disturbances, the primate allegedly scratched several children, prompting a police response. Officers believe the monkey may have become aggressive due to hunger and taunting by the students.

Eventually, officers found the monkey and subdued it with a Taser. The animal, which was not seriously injured, was turned over to animal protection authorities and will join a zoo following a quarantine period, officials said.

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Pictures: Man takes his pet GOLDFISH for walks using unique home-made contraption

mirror.co.uk

- Dec 31, 2014 13:16
- By Luke Traynor

The former sheet metal worker concept is now taking the humble housebound fish out into the big brave world

Mercury

World's first device to take your pet fish for a walk

Mike Warren-Madden certainly turns heads when taking his pet for a walk - it's a GOLDFISH.

The former sheet metal worker spent thousands of hours designing his 'Aquatic Perambulator' so he can give his fish a unique view of the world.

He came up with the plan around seven years ago as a way to help pet fish Malcolm have a more exciting life.

Malcolm went on to live for 11 years because, Mike claims, of his adventurous lifestyle - which included trips to the pub and walks around town.

Mercury

Streets ahead: World's first device to take your pet fish for a walk

Despite Malcolm passing away Mike hopes his pioneering legacy will now see an entrepreneur come forward to invest in the invention.

Mike, 60, from Holmfirth, West Yorks, said: "We had some right looks around town, we stopped traffic, but everyone has got into it now.

"It's not every day you see someone taking a fish for a walk.

Walkies! Mike pounding the streets with a goldfish

"If a fish is in a bowl on a shelf swimming in circles it must get bored. I decided it would be fun

Mercury

to take it out with me down the pub.

“People have said to me the fish couldn’t see what was going on, but I always said ‘how do you know?’

“Malcolm lived to almost 12 years old, I think he was getting something out of it.”

Mercury

Back home: The goldfish in more familiar surroundings

The Aquatic Perambulator stands around four-foot tall and is made from laser-cut mild steel.

Mike, who lives with wife Shirley, 58, said: “Because of my background as a sheet metal worker I have been able to build this at little cost - but for someone else it would cost hundreds to make.

“I think I’d like someone to come forward and help me motorise it perhaps with a remote control.”

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Asheville's Grove Park Inn has a reputation as one of North Carolina's premiere hotels. First opened in 1913, the Grove Park was built by Edwin Wiley Grove and his friend and Son-In-Law Thomas Seely. Grove had made a fortune selling Grove's Tasteless Chill Tonic throughout the South. Asheville and the nearby towns were popular health resorts at the time, and when grove visited Asheville on his doctor's advice he decided to stay. Soon, he and Seely began construction on the inn, designed to rival the finest hotels in America. George Gerhswin, Harry Houdini, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and even President Obama have all stayed at the Grove Park. Known for its elegance and comfort, the Grove Park hosts several world-class restaurants and a superior spa on site. It's a beautiful, relaxing, romantic inn that you would never want to leave. And, according to legend, one guest never did.

The Pink Lady is the Grove Park Inn's resident and much-loved phantom. This kindly spirit has been seen and felt in the halls of the Inn for nearly a hundred years. She is said to be the spirit of a young woman who fell to her death from a balcony on the fifth floor of the Inn in the 1920s. She is usually seen in the form of a pink mist, or sometimes as a full-fledged apparition of a young woman in a pink ball gown.

There are various stories about who this young lady was and how she met her end. Some say that she had come to the Inn for a clandestine evening with married lover, and who threw herself from the balcony when he called an end to their affair. Others say she was a young debutante who accidentally slipped and fell to her death.

Whatever her origins, The Pink Lady is agreed to be a good-natured, even a kind spirit. She seems to particularly enjoy the company of children, and seems a little more willing to reveal herself to them than to adults. She has been seen by the beds of children who were taken ill during a stay at the Inn, speaking softly to them and gently stroking their hands. In one famous case, a doctor who had been staying with his family at the Grove Park left a note when he checked out asking the staff to thank the lady in the pink ball gown, and that his children told him how much they enjoyed playing with her during their stay.

The Ghost of the Pink Lady is also said to enjoy playing small pranks. She's been blamed for lights, air conditioners, and other electrical devices turning on and off by themselves. She seems to enjoy rearranging objects in the rooms. It's also been said that she'll occasionally wake up a sleeping guest with a good tickling on the feet.

While she has been seen all around the Inn, the spirit seems particularly attached to room 545. According to tradition it was from the balcony off of this room that the young woman fell to her death.

The Inn's employees are used to the presence of The Pink Lady, and treat her as just another part of the tradition of the grand old hotel.

How to Get There

The Grove Park Inn is located at 290 Macon Avenue in Asheville. The Inn is open year-round, reservations are recommended.

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Poisonous Ice Resurfacer Sends 81 To Area Hospitals

The Huffington Post | By Andy Campbell huffingtonpost.com

Posted: 12/16/2014 10:56 am EST Updated: 12/17/2014 2:59 pm EST

An ice resurfacing machine silently poisoned players and fans at a junior hockey game in Wisconsin on Saturday, sending 81 to area hospitals.

And that's actually a good thing, in one respect.

An emergency official told CNN that if the carbon monoxide leak, caused by faulty combustion in the machine's propane tank, hadn't sickened so many at the same time, people could have died.

"The good thing about this is a lot of people got sick all at once, so it was recognized quickly and the exposure was pretty limited," Matt Lazio, director of St. Clare's emergency department, told CNN affiliate WISC. "This is a potentially fatal kind of poisoning."

The leak started at the end of a game between the Dells Ducks and the Ice Hawks at Poppy Waterman Ice Arena in Lake Delton. Dozens of people fell ill, and were treated for nausea, fainting, vomiting and dizziness. One Ducks player fainted and was hospitalized Sunday in Milwaukee, where he received oxygen therapy in a hyperbaric chamber, according to the Star Tribune. He's reportedly recovering.

One of two resurfacing vehicles -- a machine that smooths out the ice during and after hockey games -- "wasn't fully combusting the propane" and was slowly filling up the building with carbon monoxide gas, a fire official said.

Meanwhile, the building's ventilation system didn't clear the gas, and Wisconsin state law doesn't require the rink to have carbon monoxide detectors, according to Deadspin.

The problem had apparently been ongoing. Ice Hawks head coach Nick Fatis told the Tribune that his players had fallen ill at the rink before.

The rink was closed earlier this week while emergency officials investigated. But carbon-monoxide poisoning is a real concern at any ice rink -- just two weeks ago, 16 players in Ottawa were hospitalized over the same type of leak.

CORRECTION: *A previous version of this story referred to the ice resurfacing machine as a Zamboni. The malfunctioning machine was not manufactured by the Zamboni company.*

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Police investigate nativity donkey 'squashed to death' by obese man at Spanish Christmas market - BelfastTelegraph.co.uk

By Lizzie Dearden – 17 December 2014

belfasttelegraph.co.uk

The donkey (not pictured) reportedly died of its injuries days later.

The donkey (not pictured) reportedly died of its injuries days later.

The death of a nativity donkey in Spain after it was "squashed" by an obese man who climbed into its pen is being investigated by police.

The five-month-old animal, called Platero, was not meant to be ridden as part of the Christmas scene in the town of Lucena, in Andalusia.

But according to a complaint by animal welfare groups, a 23-stone man climbed on the donkey's back to pose for a picture that has caused outrage on social media.

Two days after the incident on December 10, locals noticed the small animal could barely stand and it died the next morning after vets said they could not heal its injuries.

Activists likened the animal's wounds to being "burnt inside" and said it spent three days "in agony" calling for the use of live animals in nativity scenes to be banned.

The Asociación de Defensa del Borrico (Association for the Defence of Donkeys) and the Círculo Animalista de Podemos Lucena (Lucena Animal Circle) have made a formal complaint to the police, who are now investigating.

A statement on Facebook said: "The nativity scene became a slaughterhouse…our Platero was literally squashed by a man whose photo was spread by WhatsApp users calling it a 'hazaña' (great achievement).

"The man climbed the fence and pushed Platero around until he could proudly pose "galloping" with almost 150kg of weight on his fragile body…fatally injuring him."

The groups vowed to "move heaven and earth" to find out who was responsible, saying the incident was causing "outrage and repulsion" across Spain.

If a vet rules that the man caused the donkey's death, the council may take legal action, El Mundo reported.

It is not the first time the peace of the Lucena's nativity scene has been disturbed – two years ago the baby Jesus was stolen and a cane was stuck in an animal's eye.

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Police: Aggressive monkey subsisted on chocolate

upi.com

Police said the monkey had been the subject of more than a dozen emergency calls during the past few weeks.

By Ben Hooper | Dec. 18, 2014 at 10:03 AM

MARSEILLE, France, Dec. 18 (UPI) -- Authorities said an aggressive monkey Tased after weeks on the loose had been subsisting on a diet of Kinder chocolates.

Marseille police said the monkey had been the subject of more than a dozen calls to authorities from the Castellanne area in recent weeks, including one occasion when it "caused bedlam" at an elementary school and "scratched some children," but the primate always managed to flee before officers arrived.

Police said they finally caught up to the monkey Monday and captured it using a Taser.

Investigators said the monkey was apparently abandoned after being kept illegally. They said the animal had been subsisting on a diet of Kinder chocolates given to it by children. Malnutrition and suspected abuse from some children may have contributed to the monkey's aggressive behavior, police said.

An investigation has been opened to identify the animal's owner and charges of illegal possession of a wild animal are possible, police said.

The monkey, which was not seriously injured, was turned over to animal protection authorities and will join a zoo's exhibit following a quarantine period.

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Mehmet Ali Agca shot Pope John Paul II twice from close range in St Peter's Square. Photo: Ozan Kose/AFP

Pope gunman kicked out of Italy

Pope gunman kicked out of Italy

Published: 29 Dec 2014 16:17 GMT+01:00

Mehmet Ali Agca, the Turk who attempted to assassinate John Paul II, was ordered out of Italy on Monday, two days after he paid a surprise visit to the late Pope's tomb.

The 56-year-old former right-wing extremist, has been in custody since Saturday, when police realized he had entered the country without the appropriate visa.

He was expected to be put on a plane out of the country on Monday after a magistrate rejected an appeal for him to be detained and questioned in connection with an unresolved investigation into the 1983 disappearance of a 15-year-old schoolgirl, Emanuela Orlandi.

While serving time in an Italian prison for his 1981 assassination attempt on the late Polish Pope, Agca claimed in an interview that Orlandi, a Vatican citizen, had been kidnapped by Bulgarian agents from the same Grey Wolves movement of which he was a member. He never provided any evidence to support his claim and the case was closed in July 1997.

Agca's visit to the Vatican on Saturday came 31 years to the day after John Paul visited him in prison in Rome to forgive him for the 1981 shooting that nearly killed the leader of the world's Catholics.

Then 23, he shot the Pope twice from close range in St Peter's Square, one bullet passing through his abdomen and another narrowly missing his heart.

Vatican police agreed to let him lay white roses on the late Pope's tomb but his request for a meeting with current Pope Francis was rebuffed by officials who have made no secret that they regard the former gunman as a slightly deranged publicity seeker.

Agca, who now professes to be a devout Catholic, served nearly three decades in prisons in Italy and Turkey for the papal assassination attempt and other crimes including the murder of a journalist.

His motive for trying to kill the Pope remains unclear. He initially testified that he had acted alone but later claimed the Bulgarian and Soviet secret services had orchestrated the attempted murder because of the Polish Pope's anti-communist stance.

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Pope Lick Monster of Louisville

By J Nathan Couch on July 31, 2013

Wisconsin paranormal researcher J. Nathan Couch recently took a "legend trip" to Kentucky. Legend tripping is the act of visiting an allegedly haunted location to try and experience the legend for yourself. This is the second in a series of articles by Couch following the Waverly Hills Sanatorium tour.

The Pope Lick train tressel in Lousiville, Kentucky, home of the Pope Lick monster

The Pope Lick Monster is said to be a strange, savage amalgamation. He's often described as a large humanoid creature with furry, goat-like legs, alabaster skin, wide-set eyes, and horns that protrude from greasy fur. The monster is sometimes referred to as Goatman or even Sheepman. According to story, the beast was originally captured in the wilds of Canada around the end of the 19th century. The Goatman became the star of a circus's freak show until an electrical storm caused a train derailment. This devil-like creature was supposedly the only survivor. Instead of returning to the vast northern wilderness, the Goatman made his way to the Pope Lick Trestle, and is said to reside there even now.

The monster is said to possess a wide array of supernatural skills to lure people out onto the trestle including mimicry, telepathy, and/or hypnosis. Once a victim is lured onto the trestle, the Pope Lick Monster uses its abhorrent physical appearance to frighten its intended victims, causing them to leap or fall to their demise. Some versions of the legend insist the monster waits for a train to approach—then from beneath the trestle—holds its charmed victim down until the train runs them over.

Climbing onto the trestle for a glimpse of the Pope Lick Monster has long been a recreational activity for reckless Louisville-area youths. While even entertaining the idea of such an absurd creature might make even the most ardent paranormal enthusiast feel foolish, the Pope Lick Monster has killed at least three people. That's a fact.

View from the ground of the Pope Lick tressel looming overhead

The December 30th, 1988 Louisville Courier-Journal ran a front page article entitled Trestle of Death, in which it records two tragedies. Jack "J.C." Charles Bahm II, a 17-year old Spalding University student, was struck and killed by a train February 18, 1987 while crossing the trestle. He has since been eulogized at the site of his death. "JC we love and miss you" is spray painted on the trestle's base. In May 1987, 19-year-old David Wayne Bryant died of injuries obtained in 1986 when he jumped from the trestle to dodge an oncoming locomotive.

Versions of the Pope Lick Monster legend have been in circulation since the 1960s, and the area around the trestle was a popular party location for area youth, but it took the Louisville premiere of the 1988 short film "*The Legend of the Pope Lick Monster*" to persuade the railroad it needed something more daunting than trampled chicken wire to keep the public off the trestle. The night of said premiere, two boys were arrested when they attempted to climb out onto the trestle. Immediately thereafter, a six-foot high security fence was installed.

The fence, along with a heightened police presence still hasn't kept people away from the tracks. In 2000, a 19 year-old Mount Washington man named Nicholas Jewell was shaken from the trestle by a train's vibrations as he tried to hang from the trestle to avoid being hit by a train.

On July 27, 2013 I went in search of this trestle to see if I could understand why anyone would risk their lives in search of a monster. As I turned onto Taylorsville Road, I caught a glimpse of the ancient looking track as it ran parallel to the road, nearly hidden by the trees. I felt as if I'd caught a glimpse of an immense, sleeping serpent. I turned onto Pope Lick Road and the trestle immediately towered some 100 feet overhead. The narrow, curved road had a surprisingly high amount of traffic when I was there, and with no visible shoulder on the road, my only recourse was to park at a nearby gas station. As soon as I pulled into the parking lot, I noticed a Louisville Sheriff's Department patrol car sitting unmanned. I refused to be daunted by this; I'd come all the way from Wisconsin for this trip. There would be no turning back. Besides, I had no intention of going anywhere near the tracks, nor did I plan to climb any fences.

Creek at the base of the Pope Lick tressel

Despite my lawful intentions, I felt like a criminal as I navigated an astonishingly high amount of traffic to take pictures from a nearby bicycle trail. Next I walked down the shoulder of the road to stand beneath the tracks. I felt a strong need to gaze up. As I did, the light through the railroad ties was dazzling, and I felt dizzy on the uneven shoulder. My imagination conjured up the approach of a train. The trestle is 772 feet from end-to-end. If you're stranded up there with a train coming, it's impossible to out run the locomotive and the engineer has no hope of stopping in time. The body of one of the men that was hit was recovered a couple of miles from the trestle. I turned and examined the creek, which on this day barely qualified as a trickle. One's only choice is to leap off the trestle, a jump that it's vastly improbable to survive.

I envisioned the Goatman—a poorly disguised image of the devil himself—and I was reminded how certain members of the Jeffersontown and Louisville community believe the Pope Lick Monster—or some other supernatural force—DID persuade those kids out onto the track. As I walked back to my car, I took a final look at the antiquated, foreboding structure and I couldn't put myself in those kids' shoes at all. Having been a nervous and meek youth growing up, I couldn't imagine needing a thrill so bad that I'd wander onto the trestle.

While I wouldn't go as far as say supernatural provocation caused the death of those kids, the Pope Lick Monster DID lure them out onto the trestle, if only with his legend.

CAUTION: Trespassing ruins legend tripping for everyone. Also, never ever play or loiter on railroad tracks. Funerals aren't fun for anyone.

About J Nathan Couch

J. Nathan Couch is an author and paranormal investigator. He is part of the Wisconsin-based Paranormal Investigation and Research Society, and guides ghost walks and bus tours in support of Washington County Paranormal. His new book Goatman: Flesh or Folklore? is available now.

One Comment

1. Jamie simkins

I just watched a documentary on this thing you do not want to mess with it

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Theodosia Burr Alston was one of America's first great women of learning and accomplishment. The daughter of scandal-ridden Vice President Aaron Burr, Theodosia was widely acknowledged to be intelligent, cultured, and sophisticated. Her disappearance, and the mysterious appearance of her portrait in a home on the Outer Banks, remain one of the most intriguing unsolved mysteries of the first days of the American Republic.

in 1801, Thedosia Burr was married to John Alston, a wealthy South Carolina planter and later governor of the state. The marriage was not a happy one. Aaron Burr is said to have feared is family's fortunes were in decline, and the alliance with the wealthy South Carolinian was motivated more by economics than affection.

Burr may also have been seeking dynastic allegiances. In 1807, Burr was put on trial for treason for allegedly forming a plot for a portion of the southern states to secede, and have himself installed as king of the new country. Burr was acquitted, but he fled to Europe for four years to avoid further scandal. It would be 1812 before he returned to New York.

In South Carolina, Theodosia Burr suffered from long bouts of ill health. She frequently traveled to spas seeking treatment, and was often withdrawn from the social life in Columbia and Charleston for months on end.

In 1812, Theodosia's young son died around the same time her father returned to America. Grief-stricken, Theodosia fell into a deep depression and it was months before she felt well enough to travel to New York. On December 31, 1812, Theodosia Burr Alston boarded the schooner *Patriot* in Georgetown. She was never seen again.

The *Patriot* disappeared somewhere between South Carolina and New York. Various explanations have been offered offered for the disappearance. The War of 1812 was raging, and some say the *Patriot* was sunk by enemy action. Others say that the ship fell victim to a group of wreckers known as the Carolina Bankers. These men operated out of Nags Head, and set up false signal lights to draw ships aground in the treacherous waters around the Outer Banks. They would descend on the wrecked ships, murder the passengers and crew, and take anything worth plundering.

The fate of the *Patriot* will probably never be known. We do know that years later, a fine portrait said to be of Theodosia Burr turned up in a humble fisherman's cottage near Nags Head.

The story goes that in 1869, a Dr. William Pool was called in to treat a poor fisherman's wife who was near death. The doctor offered what treatments he could to ease the woman's pain, but there was little he could do to prolong her life. The fisherman was grateful, but had little money. Instead, he produced an unusually fine oil or trait of young woman and asked if the doctor would accept it as payment.

Shocked at finding such a valuable piece of art in a poor man's house, Dr. Pool asked the fisherman how ha came by it. He said that many years ago, a young woman had drifted ashore in a rowboat near Nags Head. The woman had no memory of who she was or where sure was from, and the only item in her possession was the fine portrait which she clung to. Eventually, she settled down in the isolated community and the fisherman had taken her as his wife.

The doctor said he would gladly accept the painting as payment, but upon hearing this the old woman rose out of bed, saying "It is mine! You shall not have it! I am on my way to visit my father in New York, and I am taking this picture of his darling Theodosia!"

William Pool's family kept the portrait and told the story for years. Now called The Nag's Head Portrait of Theodosia Burr, the painting can be seen in the Lewis Walpole Library in Farmington, Connecticut.

The Nags Head Portrait of Theodosia Burr hangs in the Lewis Walpole Library in Farmington, Connecticut

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Potter Christ, the man who would be Jesus

peashooter85 December 26th 2014, 6:01:04 pm

Arnold Potter was a devout Mormon whose early life story follows the history of Mormonism quite well. Ejected from Nauvoo, Illinois, he was one of the first Mormon pioneers to move west and settle the Great Salt Lake region. He was also an Elder, personally ordained into the Melchizedek priesthood by Joseph Smith himself. In 1856 Potter was called to serve as a missionary in Australia by Later Days Saints leader Brigham Young. On his journey to Australia, Potter underwent a metamorphosis that would change his life forever.

According to Potter, he was engulfed with the spirit of Jesus Christ, which caused him to undergo a "purifying, quickening change" which immediately transformed him into the "Potter Christ, Son of the Living God."

Upon returning from Australia, he founded his own church in California, which then moved to Independence, Missouri. He was a very eccentric man, always wearing black robes, and writing on his forehead with ink, "Potter Christ, The Living God, Morning Star". He wrote his own holy testament, called, "The Revelations of Potter Christ", which he claimed to have personally dictated into writing from a visiting angel. He made many predictions as to the coming of the Apocalypse, which he predicted would come in the late 1870's, and created a new theology which led him to be branded as a heretic by the LDS Church. He also made many predictions about the future; that in 1871 a Second American Civil War would occur caused by political disturbances in Cuba, that the Irish Fenians would be successful in conquering Canada, slavery would be re-instituted, and that President Grant would be the last elected President of the United States.

In 1872, at the height of his movement, Potter Christ announced that the time of his ascension was at hand. Leading his members to a local cliff, he announced that he would leap off the cliff and ascend to Heaven, and that his disciples too could ascend to Heaven if they followed him. He then took a running start and leaped off the cliff. Rather than ascending to Heaven, he quickly descended to the earth at terminal velocity, hitting the ground with a violent, bloody "smack". None of his disciples followed him. His remains were collected and buried later that day.

Prehistoric sex toy wasn't just a feel-good aid

Rosemary Black

nydailynews.com

Courtesy of University of Tubing The 30,000-year-old siltstone phallus doubled as a tool to ignite fires as well as a sex toy.

The world's oldest sex toy was more than just a feel-good aid. The 30,000-year-old siltstone phallus doubled as a tool to ignite fires.

The racy relic was found in a cave in Germany and is being studied at the University of Tubingen there, according to Independent Online.

The find was a rare one since examples of masculinity from that period are unusual to stumble upon, although female-inspired works of art are rather common.

The prehistoric phallus, which has marks where it was obviously used for striking against flints, also features carved rings around one polished end. Researchers say it's easy to see what it was used for.

The scientists pieced together the multitasking tool from more than a dozen fragments found in a cave complex linked with the activities not of the Neanderthals, but of modern humans.

The sex toy is estimated to be at least 28,000 years old and apparently had been discarded after being broken. There's no evidence as to how that happened. Jealous boyfriend? Frustrated spinster? The secret may be safe with early cave dwellers.

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Voodoo Priest's Primate Skull, Dead Bats Confiscated at Airport

By Amanda Hancock
Wednesday, Jul 16, 2014 • Updated at 11:47 AM EST

nbcmiami.com

A primate skull and dead bats are among the "unique threats" that have been found in the past few months at Washington Dulles International Airport.

One of the tasks of U.S. Customs and Border Protection is to intercept agriculture products that pose potential threats to America's industries -- and while that typically includes meats and fruits, a few unusual items have been intercepted recently.

A traveler from Gabon, Africa, who claimed to be a voodoo priest, arrived in June with a necklace made of the teeth of mandrill -- a primate similar to a baboon.

The passenger said he used the necklace for spiritual rituals.

In another case, CBP officials found an uncleaned primate skull in a woman's luggage who was traveling from Russia. The passenger claimed the skull, which was topped with feathers, was a token of "good luck" from Togo.

Both the necklace and skull, upon the recommendation of CDC, were later destroyed because they had the potential to introduce Ebola, HIV, monkey pox or other viruses, officials said.

Another "unusual threat" was a bucket containing dead bats, shrews, dormice, rats, mice and mongoose.

CBP officials came across a traveler who arrived from South Sudan with the five gallon bucket in May. Although the small dead animals were to be used for scientific research, the man didn't have the appropriate documents with him at the time.

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Dr. R. Andrew Chesnut

Following news that the mysterious and controversial *Santa Muerte* statue at the San Benito Municipal Cemetery had been found destroyed on Wednesday, two university professors who're considered experts on the occult offered their opinions on the matter.

Dr. R. Andrew Chesnut, author of *Devoted to Death: Santa Muerte, the Skeleton Saint* and the Bishop Walter Sullivan Chair in Catholic Studies at the Virginia Commonwealth University School of World Studies, has served as a commentator for a number of various media outlets, including the Huffington Post, regarding this subject. Chesnut has also served in such a capacity for BBC, CNN, NPR and AP.

Dr. Antonio N. Zavaleta, co-author of *Curandero Conversations: El Niño Fidencio, Shamanism and Healing Traditions of the Borderlands*, and professor of anthropology at the University of Texas at Brownsville, helped coordinate a TV documentary field shoot on Mexican witchcraft for The National Geographic Society. Zavaleta's expertise has also been sought by numerous law enforcement agencies in the investigation of ritualistic crimes and the like.

Concerning the aforementioned statue, Dr. Zavaleta believes that the sculpture displayed "classic symbols" of witchcraft – or *brujeria* – and was being used to cast a deadly spell; Dr. Chesnut, contrarily, has said he's found no evidence – at least in what's been reported – to suggest that the owner of the statue had any such intentions.

On Friday, the professors weighed in on the significance of what some may consider the *Santa Muerte* statue's desecration; the following are their responses to questions posed by the *San Benito News* regarding this issue and others.

News: Does the destruction of a *Santa Muerte* statue (especially in the manner committed in this instance) hold any significance as opposed to being incinerated? In other words, could this be the work of the owner destroying the statue in anger over its presumed use and publicity, or could this be the work of vandals offended by its imagery?

Dr. Chestnut: The destruction of the statue was most likely perpetrated by an individual or group who had seen the media coverage featuring a local anthropologist who asserted that the effigy had been placed in the cemetery as part of a black magic hex intended to kill someone. I seriously doubt that it was the owner of the statue who destroyed it, but without the presence of cameras in the cemetery we can't be certain. I imagine the perpetrator(s) smashed the effigy instead of burning it because they were in a hurry. You would need to ask the anthropologist why he specifically recommended burning the image, but I would imagine he did because of the historical use of fire in Christianity as an agent of destructive purification. The Spanish Inquisition, for example, had "heretics" and "witches" burned at the stake on a regular basis.

Dr. Zavaleta: There are no accidents or haphazard events in this world of U.S.-Mexico witchcraft (*brujeria*). Therefore the statue was placed in the cemetery deliberately and for a specific act of witchcraft. I doubt that its destruction could ever be a random act. First of all it was not committed by the person who put it there in the first place. That is out of the question. Secondly, no passerby destroyed it either. The most probable explanation for its destruction is by a person of religious faith who felt it so offensive that they had to take action. Within the context of the believer, the fact that the statue was not burned but broken up does not in any way negate the effect, in other words it's still active. Just as it was created ritually it would have to be destroyed by fire ritually in order to nullify its intended effect.

News: Have you seen anything of this nature before?

Dr. Chestnut: I know of similar incidents, especially in Mexico. However, just last March in McAllen, a vandal smashed a *Santa Muerte* altar that a resident had set up in her own yard. Interestingly, while much of the altar was destroyed, the statuettes of Saint Death were not damaged.

Dr. Zavaleta: Sure, many times on both sides of the border. But they have not been in the news.

News: Even if the statue's use was intended to cast some sort of malicious spell – could the person(s) who destroyed the statue be at risk for a "boomerang" effect?

Dr. Chestnut: For those who believe in *Santa Muerte*, the perpetrator(s) of the destruction of her statue are in grave danger of feeling the force of her scythe. Many devotees believe that *Santa Muerte*, because she is not a Christian figure, can be vengeful especially with those who have disrespected her. Thus, in Mexico the phrase "I'm not a *Santa Muerte* devotee, but I respect her," has become a mantra.

Dr. Zavaleta: Well, that person already knows the answer. It is unlikely that it could or would do harm to any person other than the intended target. The rest is just conjecture. The boomerang effect refers to the spell coming back on the person that cast it only, not to being transferred.

News: On what level would the statue's destruction be considered a desecration?

Dr. Chestnut: Devotees of *Santa Muerte* will regard the destruction of the statue as a desecration of their faith just as Catholics would view the smashing of an image of a saint or the Virgin Mary as an attack on their religion.

Dr. Zavaleta: If you are a believer in the *Santa Muerte*, I could see how you could feel very abused to see the object of your reverence desecrated. Just as we would a Christian cross upside-down or the burning of the American flag. Same thing.

News: What do you believe should've been the appropriate action to take regarding the statue's presence at the cemetery prior to its destruction? Did the City of San Benito have a right to remove it if no one claimed it?

Dr. Chestnut: This is partly a legal question which I'm not in a position to answer. However, given the very public allegations of sorcery intended to kill coupled with her reputation as a sinister saint, the destruction of her statue seemed almost inevitable. Even if the owner of the statue had wanted to reclaim it the accusations of deathly hexes precluded him/her from such action.

Dr. Zavaleta: The city had every right to remove a foreign object from the cemetery and one that is controversial. There is no appropriate action; it's just what the believers think and do. For example, in this case it should have been removed to a neutral site and burned with a mixture of salt and alcohol. That would have removed any spell associated with it.

3 comments

1. I guarantee you, God had me launch a campaign in Mexico AGAINST idol-worship. After conferences against this idol in the prison in Nuevo Laredo, even the prisoners wised up and took it out of the plaza. TV interviews were had with me, and then other parts of Mexico were also simultaneously beginning to confront this idol. Bulldozers eventually took down some 'chapels' since tourism was fading due to the frightening side of the image. The Laredo Police in Texas actually look at crime sites for this idol to get a better grasp of whether or not drug pushers are involved, since they tend worship it. Break any commandment and there will be consequences. But break especially the 1st Commandment (often leading to breaking the 5th) and you'll discover that satan and his legions are prowling about like roaring lions. FEAR NOT... for God can overtake it all. But fear GOD and breaking His laws... Rev. Fr. Ed Roche.

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, mind, soul, and strength. SPREAD SUCH.

2. Fr. Ed Roche, in all your rant the only one that was taking care of anything was man, not god. There is nothing to fear of a god that is supposedly "all powerful" and "all knowing" but is never there to make sure crimes don't happen. Guess who IS there? MAN is there, not god. Police, good citizens, and people with common sense and compassion. All religion does is cause more conflict and stupid people that think an invisible man in the sky or a magical skeleton will protect them from what they fear, be it anything from getting sick to getting caught in a crime. Breaking ANY commandment can lead to breaking the 5th because there is no god or devil making sure you keep/break them, but the least of all to lead to the 5th would be the first. This would be like breaking the law, and breaking a stupid statue does not lead to breaking the law. It is mentality, common sense, and compassion, which if you don't have, in ANY religion, will lead you to breaking the law. I wonder, which of the ten commandments do priests break that lead them to molesting little children? Obviously the fear of god is not present, but the fear of the LAW obviously has the church in drastic repair mode, because they know that MAN serves better justice than ANY make belief god.

3. I want to thank Dr. Chestnut for his non-prejudicial stance on this topic. Dr. Zalaveta's conclusions are paranoid and frankly a bit racist. There is no outward indication of murderous intent whatsoever in the erection of this shrine- and the true intent will always remain private to the one who put the statue there.

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Quake experts cleared in 'science on trial' case

Quake experts cleared in 'science on trial' case

Published: 10 Nov 2014 17:30 GMT+01:00 Updated: 11 Nov 2014 08:10 GMT+01:00

UPDATED: Seven Italian scientists who faced prison for failing to predict the deadly L'Aquila earthquake were cleared on Monday after an appeal court overturned manslaughter convictions that had sparked international outrage.

The seven men were sentenced to six years in jail in October 2012 after a court in the medieval town of L'Aquila found them guilty of causing multiple deaths by having negligently downplayed the risk of the town being hit by a major earthquake just days before the killer tremor struck in April 2009.

But after a month-long appeal trial in the mountain town east of Rome, that verdict was overturned by a panel of three judges which concluded that six of the seven had committed no crime.

The judges partially upheld some of the charges against one defendant, Bernardo De Bernardinis but downgraded his sentence to a two-year suspended prison sentence that will not lead to him having a criminal record.

"The credibility of Italy's entire scientific community has been restored," said Stefano Gresta, the President of the National Institute of Geophysics and Volcanology, whose predecessor, Enzo Boschi, was one of the most eminent of the defendants.

Franco Coppi, one of the lawyers for the scientists, said: "It is very pleasing that our arguments have been upheld although we remain profoundly sorry for the families of the victims and understand their reactions."

But Stefania Pezzopane, an Italian senator and former president of the Aquila region, called the appeal decision "disconcerting and contradictory".

The precise reasons for the verdict will not be made clear until the full written judgement is released in several months' time. The prosecution may seek to have the convictions reinstated via a final appeal to a higher court.

The defendants had been backed by outraged scientists from across the world.

Numerous critics claimed that their prosecution had put science itself on trial, warning that experts would stop offering any kind of risk assessments if they were opening themselves up to potential litigation.

Perverse and ludicrous

Many compared the sentencing to the persecution of 17th-century astronomer Galileo, who, under threat of torture, was forced to recant his assertion that the Earth moves around the Sun.

The journal Nature called the original verdict "perverse" and the sentencing "ludicrous" given the acknowledged impossibility of predicting earthquakes.

The seven convicted men were all members of a Major Risks Committee which met in L'Aquila on March 31, 2009, six days before the 6.3-magnitude quake struck the town, triggering the collapse of many inadequately constructed buildings within its walls and in surrounding villages.

The 28-second quake, which struck in the middle of the night, left thousands homeless, and five years later L'Aquila has only partially been rebuilt.

The prosecution in the case had depicted the experts as having irresponsibly offered reassurances that persuaded citizens who might otherwise have sought refuge outside or in safer buildings to stay in their homes.

The Risks committee had been convened after a series of smaller tremors in the run-up to the deadly quake.

Key to the prosecution case was a statement by Bernardinis, then the deputy director of the Civil Protection Agency, describing the seismic activity as posing "no danger" to residents.

Although the defence pointed out that was only one of many observations made by the various committee members, the prosecution succeeded in persuading the solitary judge in the first trial that the experts had offered "disastrous reassurance" to L'Aquila citizens when they should have been making it clear there was a very real risk of a quake.

US writer David Wolman, who carried out a major investigation into the initial trial, concluded that the scientists had been unjustly convicted largely because of the difficulty many ordinary people have in understanding scientific advice.

"Where a career scientists hears the word 'improbable' and knows that rare events do occur, a non-scientist hears 'improbable' as shorthand for 'it ain't gonna happen,'" Wolman wrote in an essay on the case for online magazine Matter.

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Rare weather event fills Grand Canyon to brim with clouds

By Associated Press on December 12, 2014 at 12:36 AM, updated December 12, 2014 at 12:40 AM cleveland.com

Grand Canyon Clouds

Visitors to Mather Point on the South Rim of Grand Canyon National Park, in Ariz., view a rare weather phenomenon Thursday — a sea of thick clouds filling the canyon just below the rim.

GRAND CANYON NATIONAL PARK, Ariz. -- A rare weather phenomenon at the Grand Canyon had visitors looking out on a sea of thick clouds just below the rim.

The total cloud inversion is expected to hang inside the canyon throughout Thursday.

Cory Mottice of the National Weather Service says the weather event happens about once every several years, though the landmark was treated to one last year.

The fog that has been shrouding parts of northern Arizona is courtesy of recent rains. Mottice says the fog is able to stick around and built up in the Grand Canyon overnight when there is no wind.

With an inversion, the clouds are forced down by warm air and unable to rise.

Mottice says the Grand Canyon gradually will clear up in the coming days.

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Christmas turkey escapes dinner table by staging daring CHICKEN RUN escapes

mirror.co.uk

Real-life Chicken Run: Talented turkey destined for Christmas dinner table tells farmer to get stuffed

- Dec 18, 2014 11:30
- By Liam Corcoran

Gobbles, the 14lb whopper, learned how to fly and climb trees and is now being kept as a pet

A brainy turkey has saved itself from the Christmas dinner table by staging a series of daring 'Chicken Run' style escapes.

The plucky bird, Gobbles, is now being kept as a PET by owner Matthew Cooke after learning to fly and hide up trees.

Domestic turkeys bred for the table can't normally take to the skies but the 14lbs whopper developed the ability to fly - to tell the farmer to 'get stuffed'.

Gobbles, who is six months old, began flapping his way over walls, fences and up trees in October.

Gobbles the escaping turkey

His antics have been giving workers at Rectory Farm the run around and even the sheepdog, Jake, was used to round-up the unruly bird.

Eventually farmer Cooke, 77, of Yatton, Somerset, took pity on the turkey and will be keeping him as a pet.

More than 800 birds a year are reared on the farm and have nearly all been shipped off for Christmas - but Gobbles has been spared the axe.

Matthew's grandson Oliver, 26, knew after just 12 weeks that Gobbles was going to be a problem.

Oliver said: "He came to the farm at one day old in July. Around October he kept getting out and would swoop up trees and escape.

SWNS

Taking flight: Gobbles began flapping his way over walls, fences and up trees in October

"He just kept getting out - it was very frustrating.

"My granddad has been farming turkeys for 60 years and he never had one get out before.

"At about six months, they are ready for Christmas. We have shipped all the others off. It's quite possible that he sensed Christmas was coming. He lives in the farm yard now.

"When he got out, he would never go too far. He just hung around outside really. We have to climb up to go and collect him.

"When we do get him in the turkey shed, he seems to have mastered the art of hide and seek and we can't see him, only for him to suddenly re-appear.

Challenge: Oliver knew after just 12 weeks that Gobbles was going to be a problem

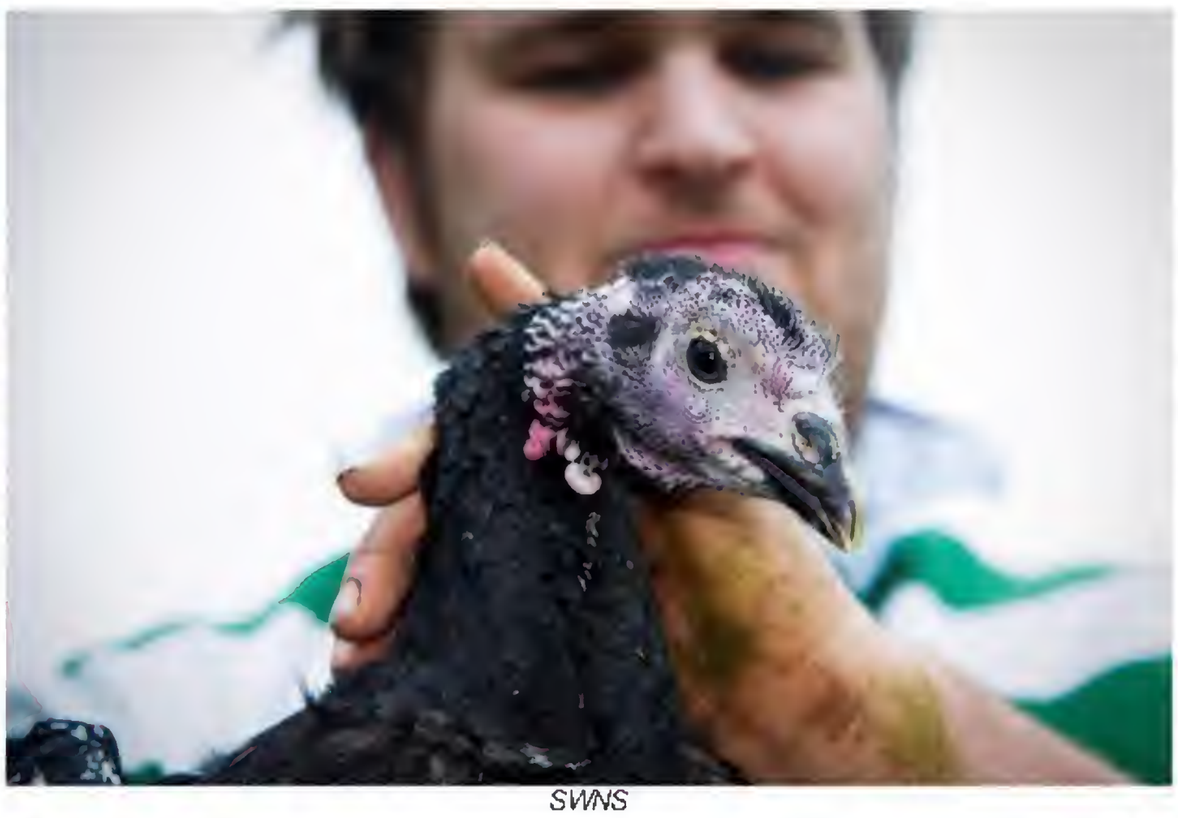
"He has also tried to make numerous escape bids by flying over the fence. He is the turkey which refuses to be caught.

"We don't let him in the house but he is definitely a farm feature now. He's a very friendly bird.

SWNS

"I don't think he noticed when all the other birds were taken away. He is still quite fat but he is quite happy, clucking away.

"He's very fat, but he is one of a kind. After his exploits we felt it only fair to keep him on the farm as a pet.



SWNS

No dinner: It's quite possible that Gobbles sensed Christmas was coming

"He is such a mischievous and friendly character and will be able to spend the rest of his days mooching around the place."

Oliver does not clip the birds wings, with the majority never making a bid for freedom.

"They sort of half fly," Oliver added. "Normally, they don't fly out of where they are. We have never had this problem before.

"Because of their weight, they don't really fly. We don't have to clip their wings or anything like that."

Wild turkeys, which are leaner and fitter than domestic 'table' birds, can fly short distances to roost safe from predators.

But farm-bred fowl normally do not fly.

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Many students, when asked by a teacher or professor to volunteer in front of the class, shy away, avoid eye contact, and try to seem as plain and unremarkable as possible. The same is true in dental school – unless it comes to laughing gas.

As a fourth year dental student, I've had times where I've tried to avoid professors' questions about anatomical variants of nerves, or the correct way to drill a cavity, or what type of tooth infection has symptoms of hot and cold sensitivity. There are other times where you cannot escape having to volunteer. These include being the first "patient" to receive an injection from one of your classmate's unsteady and tentative hands. Or having an impression taken with too much alginate so that all of your teeth (along with your uvula and tonsils) are poured up in a stone model.

But volunteering in the nitrous oxide lab … that's a different story. The lab day is about putting ourselves in our patients' shoes, to be able to empathize with them when they need to be sedated. For me, the nitrous oxide lab might have been the most enjoyable 5 minutes of my entire dental education.

In today's dental practice, nitrous oxide is a readily available, well-researched, incredibly safe method of reducing patient anxiety with little to no undesired side effects. But this was not always the case.

The Oxford Textbook of Anaesthesia for Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery argues that "with increasingly refined diets [in the mid-nineteenth century] and the use of copious amounts of sugar, tooth decay, and so dentistry, were on the increase." Prior to the modern day local anesthesia armamentarium, extractions and dental procedures were completed with no anesthesia. Patients self-medicated with alcohol or other drugs, but there was no predictable or controllable way to prevent patients from experiencing excruciating pain.

That is until Horace Wells, a dentist from Hartford, Connecticut started taking an interest in nitrous oxide as a method of numbing patients to pain.

Dr Horace Wells, by Laird W.

Wells became convinced of the analgesic properties of nitrous oxide on 11 December 1844 after observing a public display in Hartford of a man inhaling the gas and subsequently hitting his shin on a bench. After the gas wore off, the man miraculously felt no pain. With inspiration from this demonstration and a strong belief in the analgesic (and possibly the amnestic) qualities of nitrous oxide, on 12 December, Wells proceeded to inhale a bag of the nitrous oxide and have his associate John Riggs extract one of his own teeth. It was risky—and a huge success. With this realization that dental work could be pain free, Wells proceeded to test his new anesthesia method on over a dozen patients in the following weeks. He was proud of his achievement, but he chose not to patent his method because he felt pain relief should

Nevius. Public domain via Wikimedia Commons .

be "as free as the air."

This discovery brought Wells to the Ether Dome at the Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston. Before an audience of Harvard Medical School faculty and students, Wells convinced a volunteer from the audience to have their tooth extracted after inhaling nitrous oxide. Wells' success came to an abrupt halt when this volunteer screamed out in pain during the extraction. Looking back on this event, it is very likely that the volunteer did not inhale enough of the gas to achieve the appropriate anesthetic effect. But the reason didn't matter—Wells was horrified by his volunteer's reaction, his own apparent failure, and was laughed out of the Ether Dome as a fraud.

The following year, William Morton successfully demonstrated the use of ether as an anesthetic for dental and medical surgery. He patented the discovery of ether as a dental anesthetic and sold the rights to it. To this day, most credit the success of dental anesthesia to Morton, not Wells.

After giving up dentistry, Horace Wells worked unsuccessfully as a salesman and traveled to Paris to see a presentation on updated anesthesia techniques. But his ego had been broken. After returning the United States, he developed a dangerous addiction to chloroform (perhaps another risky experiment for patient sedation, gone awry) that left him mentally unstable. In 1848, he assaulted a streetwalker under the influence. He was sent to prison and in the end, took his own life.

This is the sad story of a man whose discovery revolutionized dentists' ability to effectively care for patients while keeping them calm and out of pain. As a student at the University of Connecticut School of Dental Medicine, it is a point of pride knowing that Dr. Wells made this discovery just a few miles from where I have learned about the incredible effects of nitrous oxide. My education has taught me to use it effectively for patients who are nervous about a procedure and to improve the safety of care for patients with high blood pressure. This is a day we can remember a brave man who risked his own livelihood in the name of patient care.

Featured image credit: Laughing gas, by Rumford Davy. Public domain via Wikimedia Commons.

Andrew Brodsky is a fourth year dental student at the University of Connecticut School of Dental Medicine in Farmington, Connecticut.

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Bundesarchiv, Bild 183-61478-0004
Foto: Weiß, Günter | 13. Januar 1959

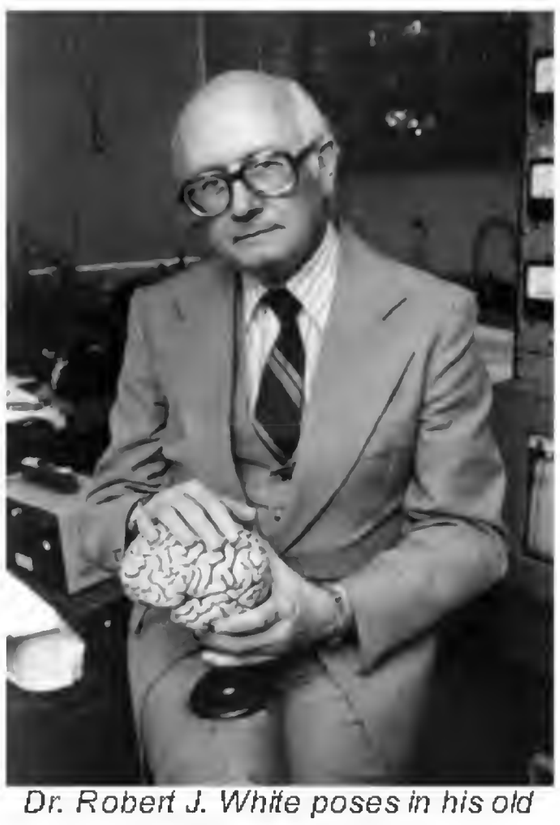
Robert White: Cleveland's Dr. Frankenstein - Who Forted? Magazine

By Ken Summers on November 7, 2014 whofortedblog.com

The Cold War saw great competitions arise between the Soviet Union and the United States. If the USSR did it, the US wanted to equal if not better their results. Mostly, we remember the arms race and nuclear tensions between the two countries, but there were many other stranger battles to be fought on the fringes of science. Top secret experiments in mind over matter including telekinesis and remote viewing played out in secret on both sides. The race was on to find out who was better at the advancement of science.

In one of the lesser-known and bizarre scientific ventures, Soviet scientists such as Vladimir Demikhov were taking organ transplantation far beyond its acceptable boundaries. It was 1954 when he unveiled his greatest experiment (or abomination) in the form of a two-headed dog. Somewhere between the mythological Greek hell hound Cerberus and mutated animals displayed in carnival freak shows around the world, Demikhov's creation was an attempt to push transplant science to its absolute limits. (*You can click here for an image of one of his two-headed dogs after surgery;* ***dog lovers, you have been warned.***) One of his two-headed dogs was later taxidermied and today is on display at the Pauli Stradini Museum Historiae Medcinae in Latvia.

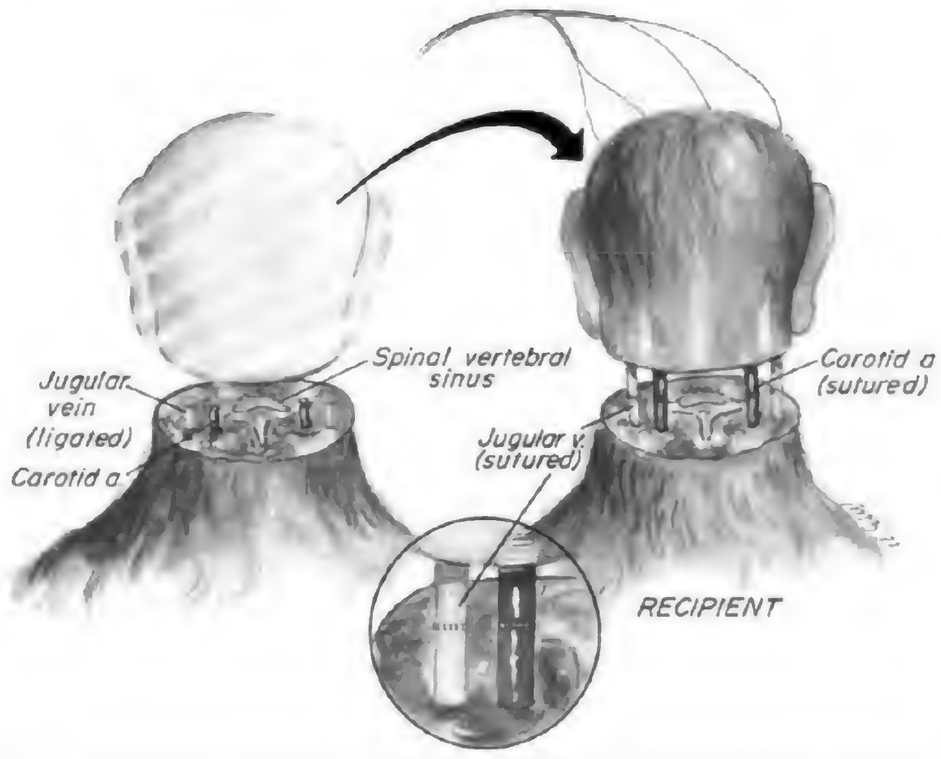
This extreme step forward was replicated in the shocking experiments over the following decade in a quiet lab in Cleveland, Ohio.



Dr. Robert J. White poses in his old lab with a model brain.

What began in 1962 at Case Western Reserve University's School of Medicine were similar experiments on dogs, seeing if a second brain could be connected to a living dog and kept alive. Early successes led to attempts by Dr. Robert J. White to keep a brain alive free of the body. According to EKG machines hooked up to a monkey's brain suspended over a pan and pumped full of blood, the brain appeared to remain conscious even 12 hours after removal from the body. But this wasn't enough for his colleagues. graphic results were one thing, yet proving the brain is still conscious is another matter entirely.

White set out to revise his experiment in a manner that could positively show that the disembodied brain was still functioning normally. This time, he set out to take the head of a rhesus monkey and surgically attach it to the body is another monkey. Essentially, it was surgical head swapping.



An artist's simplified version of Dr. White's monkey head swapping. (White et al., 1971)

In 1970, Dr. White realized his ambitious experiment. The head was successfully attached to a different body and responded to external stimuli. Unfortunately, this experiment would only truly allow for brain survival, as any attempt to connect the two spinal cords together would be far too impossibly complex to even attempt. The monkey only survived

for eight days before the host body's immune system rejected the transplanted head, although with modern advances in neurosurgery, Dr. Sergio Canavero of Turin Advanced Neuromodulation Group believes we have finally come far enough to make a complete head transplant possible.

In a strange echoing of the past, White was contacted by Russian scientists who were very interested in the work he was performing. He went to the USSR in 1966 where he witnessed first-hand the two-headed dogs, along with dog heads being kept alive by machines built to mimic the circulatory and respiratory functions of a body. Their deeper motivations were not very humble; Russian scientists were eager to learn the secrets of extending life far beyond the death of the body.

In 20o7, Jim Fields produced a short documentary about these experiments titled *A: Head B: Body*. Fields traveled to Cleveland to interview the famous doctor as well as explore his old lab, sealed up for years but remaining much as it had been at the time of the experiments. This was one of White's last filmed interviews; he passed away in 2010.

Virginia Leith starred as "Jan in the pan" in The Brain That Wouldn't Die (1959).

Virginia Leith starred as "Jan in the pan" in *The Brain That Wouldn't Die* (1959).

This macabre dabbling in living disembodied heads bubbled over into popular culture of the time. These early experiments inspired a stable of low-budget horror films, including *The Head* (1959), originally a German film titled *Die Nackte und der Satan* (or *The Nude and the Devil*). When it premiered in Cleveland in 1961 at the Hippodrome, shrunken heads were given away free to patrons. The American film *The Brain That Wouldn't Die* (created in 1959 but not released until 1962) raised questions about the morality of such experimentation with Jan's head pleading for her own death, but for fans of *Mystery Science Theater 3000*, it provided a lot more hilarious entertainment value.

While we might cringe at the sight of surgically decapitated animals seemingly aware of their predicaments and debate the ethics of such experiments, what was learned from these surgeries has had a profoundly positive effect on neurosurgery as we know it. Techniques including the cooling of the brain as was done in the experiments have helped save lives and led to major advances in repairing damage from brain trauma. Yet White's long, successful career and great contributions to neuroscience will forever be overshadowed by the day he turned a monkey into a real-life Frankenstein's monster.

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India's secret garden took 18 years to create

December 15, 2014 news.com.au

Last updated: **December 16, 2014**

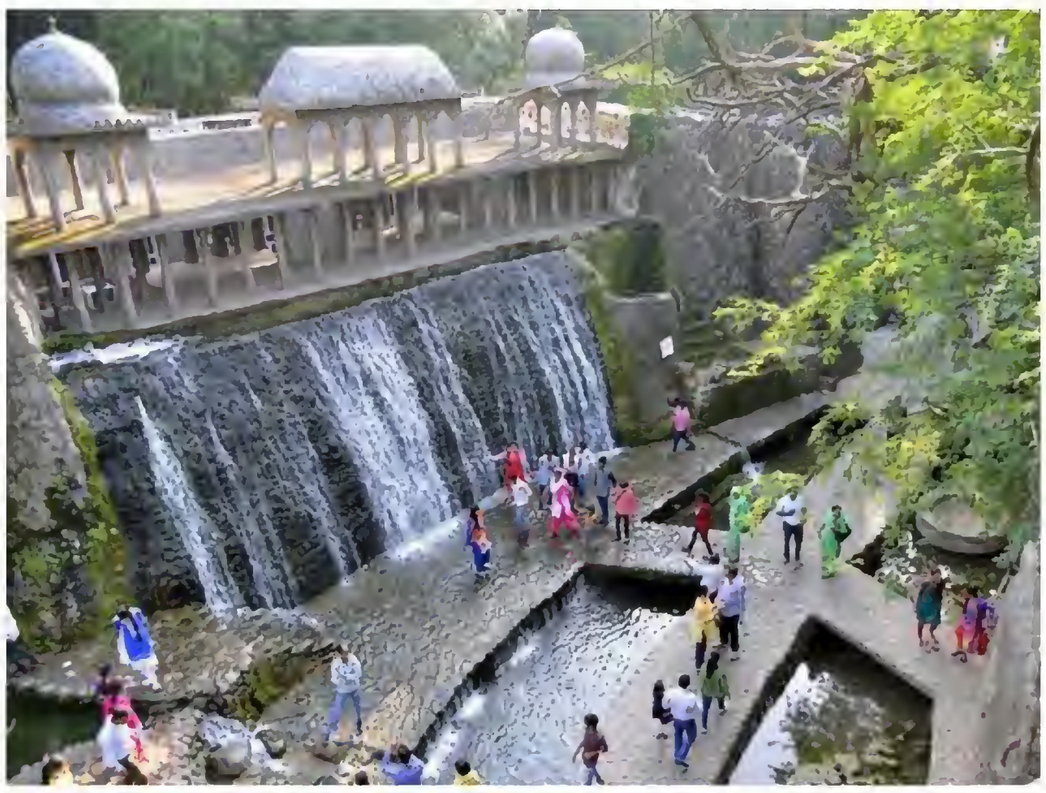
India's secret gardener reveals 18-year labour of love

- by: AFP
- 1 day ago 11:17AM

His statues have ended up in museums around the world. AFP PHOTO/NARINDER NANU. *Source:* AFP

DEEP inside his massive garden of handmade waterfalls and sculptures, Nek Chand recalls toiling away secretly in the dead of night for a staggering 18 years to create his wonderland in north India.

Riding his bicycle after dark to a state-owned forest, Chand spent night after night clearing patches of ground and transforming the landscape into a majestic garden that would eventually cover eight hectares.



Waterfalls, gardens and sculptures dot the serene environment. Source: AFP/NARINDER NANU *Source:* AFP

"I started building this garden as a hobby" in the 1950s, Chand told AFP in a rare interview on the eve of his 90th birthday on Monday.

"For 18 years nobody came to know. There was a forest here, who would come here and what for? There were no roads to come and go," Chand said nostalgically, seated in the garden that has become a major tourist attraction, drawing thousands of visitors a day.

Indian visitors in the Rock Garden, built by self-taught Indian artist Nek Chand Saini over the course of 18 years AFP/NARINDER NANU. *Source:* AFP

After the deadly violence and upheaval of partition in 1947, India set about building a capital

for Punjab state, carved out of a region that stretched across the border into newly formed Pakistan.

From the tonnes of building materials and rubbish that followed, Chand carefully collected what he considered gems while working as a lowly roads inspector in the upcoming Chandigarh city.

Pottery pieces, glass, tiles and even broken bathroom sinks were used to make sculptures of men and women, fairies and demons, elephants, monkeys and gods.

Pottery pieces, glass, tiles and broken household items wre used to create this wonderland. AFP PHOTO/NARINDER NANU *Source:* AFP

"I had many ideas, I was thinking all the time. I began carrying all the material on my bicycle and collecting it here," Chand said of his garden of mosaic pathways, hidden chambers and courtyards.

"I did three to four rounds on my cycle each day. I saw beauty and art in what people said was junk."

'Like reliving Willy Wonka'

When his secret was finally discovered in 1976, authorities threatened demolition, claiming Chand had violated strict land laws.

But an amazed public rallied behind him, leading to his appointment as head of the newly opened Rock Garden of Chandigarh.

Chand stepped up his creation of hundreds of sculptures — mostly made from broken household material and discarded personal items including electric sockets, switches, bangles and bicycle frames.

Riding his bicycle after dark to a state-owned forest, Chand spent night after night clearing patches of ground and transforming the landscape into a majestic garden AFP/NARINDER NANU. *Source:* AFP

Some made of broken glass bangles show girls dancing, others of ceramic pieces depict men at a party pouring glasses of whiskey.

Ticket sales grew as word of the secret garden spread, with some 3,000 people from across the country and overseas now wandering through daily.

"It's so amazing. It's something like reliving Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory," Jasmine Paul, a resident of Vancouver who was holidaying in India, told AFP.

"It is just like the fairy tales that you grow up reading." With no formal education in art or sculpture, Chand drew inspiration from his childhood when he played near a river flowing through his village in what is now Muslim-majority Pakistan.

Sculptures made from discarded household items. AFP PHOTO/NARINDER NANU
Source: AFP

Chand and his family were forced to flee across the border during partition because they were Hindus, finally settling in Chandigarh, the shared capital of Punjab and Haryana states.

"That is why there is a childlike quality to the sculptures," said Alan Cesarno, a British volunteer with the Nek Chand Foundation that was set up in 1997 to raise funds for the garden's upkeep.

"When you look around you realise that it is actually a child's version of a fantasy kingdom," he told AFP standing next to one of the several waterfalls.

Self-taught Indian artist Nek Chand Saini on the eve of his 90th birthday. AFP PHOTO/NARINDER NANU. *Source:* AFP

Conservation challenges

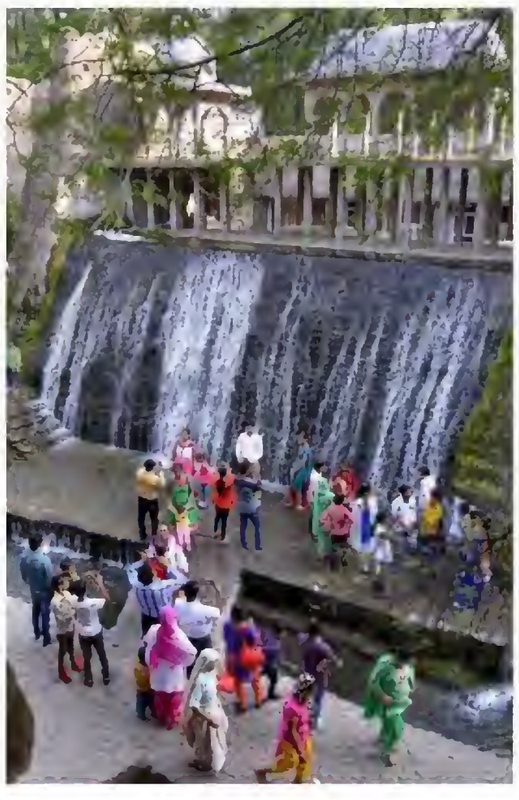
Chand's statues have found their way into museums across the world, including at the National Children's Museum in Washington, the American Folk Art Museum in New York and the RIBA gallery in Liverpool in 2007.

Back home, the garden is facing conservation challenges, including a lack of funds from the state government which takes the ticket sales, according to volunteers.

Vandalism has been reported more than once and enthusiastic visitors often climb or lean on the structures, damaging their fragile pieces.

“In a country known more for slums and garbage dumps, the rock garden stands as an exceptional example,” said Mani Dhillon, a volunteer involved in the garden’s upkeep.

“It is perhaps the only place of its kind in the entire world. The administration and the people must realise its importance, they must come forward and save it before it’s too late,” she told AFP.



Magical waterfalls enchant its visitors. AFP PHOTO/NARINDER NANU *Source:* AFP

While Chand still oversees the garden as its founding head with near daily visits, his age and failing eyesight mean he can no longer spend the long hours needed to create new sculptures.

He is however undaunted by the challenges facing his more than half a century’s work, saying he has faith in God from which he draws his strength.

“I am not scared of anything. Had I been scared, how would I have worked in the dead of the night in the jungle?”

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This is Google's cache of http://www.mythicalcreatureslist.com/mythical-creature/Roperite. It is a snapshot of the page as it appeared on Dec 8, 2014 14:01:05 GMT. The current page could have changed in the meantime.

Roperite

- #2818
- Modern Day Modern Day *(culture)*
- Deadly Deadly *(behaviour)*
- Fearsome Critters Fearsome Critters *(common type)*

On of the strange creatures of Wisconsin and Minnesota told by the lumberjacks of the 19th and early 20th centuries. This mammal was about the size of a horse with an elongated snout that rolled up and could be used as a lasso. It would use this snout to hunt rabbits but if desperate and hungry it would attack larger animals, even a careless lumberjack.

Roperite has been viewed 3131 times.
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Royal Highness: Magic mushrooms discovered at Buckingham Palace

london24.com

- Kate Nelson
- katherine.nelson@archant.co.uk

12 December, 2014 - 08:47

It gives a new meaning to Royal Highness after a species of magic mushroom was discovered growing in the grounds of Buckingham Palace.

The Amanita muscaria, commonly known as fly agaric or fly mushroom, was found during a walkabout of the private gardens for a television show to be screened on Christmas Day.

Presenter Alan Titchmarsh told The Sun he was surprised to happen upon the red and white-headed toadstool, which has hallucinogenic properties.

“That was a surprise but it shows just how varied the species are,” said the presenter of The Queen’s Garden.

Fly agaric are common and are understood to have grown naturally in the palace grounds rather than having been planted there.

The hallucinogenic properties of the mushroom have been well-known for centuries and have a long history of use in religious and shamanistic rituals, according to the Kew Gardens website.

The fungi is also important to the growth and development of many types of tree, and provides food for flies, and a breeding site for beetles.

A Buckingham Palace spokesperson said: “There are several hundred fungi species in the palace garden, including a small number of naturally occurring fly agaric mushrooms.

“As the programme explains, they are beneficial to trees, increasing their ability to take in nutrients.”

Royal officials also made clear for the record that fungi from the garden are not used in the palace kitchens.

The fungi contains poison which, in rare cases, can cause death if consumed.

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Watch Runaway Ostrich Race Along Highway

SUSANNA KIM
Dec 23, 2014, 10:21 AM ET

go.com

Unable to take to the skies, an ostrich ran away from its owner along a highway.

Video footage shows the male ostrich breaking through a toll booth on Monday before racing in front of a truck in Jihua City in eastern China.

Shopper Alert: Now Even the Post-Christmas Deals are Coming Earlier
What UPS Is Doing to Avoid Holiday Mess on Busiest Day of Year

The ostrich was about six-feet tall and weighed approximately 33 pounds, according to China's CCTV.

CCTV bg

Hours after the ostrich was seen running through the toll booth gate in the night, traffic police tried herding the ostrich toward the highway exit beside surprised drivers.

As a truck passed by, the ostrich, which is native to Africa, started to run after it.

The ostrich owner said that the flightless bird was domesticated with a female one in his house and was found missing that morning, according to CCTV.

TPG/Getty Images bg

CCTV bg

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Russia TV looks to stars over rouble

16 December 2014

bbc.com

Last updated at 07:39 ET

Pavel Globa

Astrologer Pavel Globa tells Russian viewers the rouble troubles are written in the stars

The Russian media are full of financial experts trying to explain the sharp fall in the rouble exchange rate, but one pro-Kremlin channel is predicting better times ahead - with the help of a top astrologer.

Pavel Globa, whose public career of sometimes wayward political predictions dates back to the Soviet era, tells LifeNews TV viewers that the rouble won't fall below 100 to the euro and the economy will recover by 2017. "We won't see a default in 2015, although next year won't be easy for us," he says, while repeatedly pointing out that he is "no expert on exchange rates". Mr Globa has made something of a comeback in pro-government media this year because of his 2009 prediction that Ukraine would disintegrate into three separate states.

He says the current world economic crisis began with a 20-year cycle in 2000, the year Presidents Bush and Putin were elected. All of this will end by 2020 "thanks to the conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn", Mr Globa tells viewers, although he's uneasy when the LifeNews hosts remind him that he once predicted a possible third world war in 2014. "It began, but it is a cold war," he insists. Despite his popularity among some TV bosses, social media users are almost entirely derisive. "This moonstruck charlatan was saying the opposite at the start of the year," complains one person on the LifeNews website. "Let's have a witch-doctor with some drums on next," another suggests, which receives the response: "Don't worry, that will happen."

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This ultra-modern burial building would have stacked the dead like a giant filing cabinet

cemeteries, architecture, architectural oddities

- San Cataldo Cemetery

| Copyright: Creative Commons

- San Cataldo Cemetery

Photo by archdaily.com

While construction on the San Cataldo Cemetery, a high-minded architectural proof of concept, was never completed, the intention of the brightly colored grave house can still be discerned from the rows and rows of identical tombs slots that lay empty.

Built in 1972 by Italian architect and theorist Aldo Rossi, the square building was created to illustrate a number of abstract concepts Rossi had previously written about. One of Rossi's first bildings to actually be built, the loud orange cube takes the formalism of cemetery layouts and explodes the concept into the utilitarian edifice of the San Cataldo tomb. The building stands on rows of concrete stilts and the center of the structure is an open courtyard where one can see the tight grid of empty burial niches arrayed in the floors overhead. At regular intervals among the burial squares, "window" blocks open to the outside, giving the exterior of the building an almost decorative grid.

The building won a 1972 architectural competition and was continually worked on until 1976 when Rossi suffered a car accident that prevented him from continuing the building's development. Ever since, the structure has laid empty with nary a body to be seen.

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'Smug' traffic warden slaps a parking ticket on Father Christmas' sleigh

- Dec 15, 2014 12:42
- By Harriet Robinson

Hinckley Round Table's sleigh was issued the fine after stopping outside a Co-Op for 30 seconds to pick up volunteers

Birmingham Mail

Hinckley Round Table sleigh in Leicestershire.

Special notice: Not the kind of Christmas present you want

It seems even Santa isn't entitled to special parking privileges after a traffic warden slapped a parking ticket on his sleigh.

And now Father Christmas and his little helpers face coughing up £35 - or double that if they don't pay promptly.

The bah humbug howler happened as volunteer Chris Uttley was towing the

Each year, hundreds of children await Santa's arrival with eager anticipation - but this Christmas they weren't as eager as the warden who pounced as Chris stopped for 30 SECONDS on a zig-zag line.

Chris told the Hinckley Times: "We were about to go out collecting for charity.

Birmingham Post

Not Happy: Santa Chris Uttley gets a parking ticket on his sleigh in Hinckley

"I stopped the sleigh outside the Co-op because I was waiting for the rest of the volunteers to join me.

"Because I didn't want to block the entrance with my car, I parked briefly on the zig-zag lines. I couldn't leave the sleigh in case it was vandalised.

"I was just transferring some collection tins from my car to the sleigh when she

pounced.

"My back was turned for no more than 30 seconds. As I turned round, I found a traffic warden issuing me a ticket.

"I explained the circumstances, only to be told nothing could be done. This now falls to the charity to pick up the parking ticket out of much-needed funds given to us by the public. I thought it was very heartless."

The ticket was given in under a minute and stated it was issued at 9.03am and observed from 9.03am to 9.03am.

The fine will cost the charity £35 if it pays it within 14 days, or £70 after that.

Birmingham Mail

Fined: Santa's sleigh was slapped with a parking ticket

"I found the warden was very smug," added Chris.

"It was as though she was waiting for me to move, and she pounced on us. Obviously, I would never have parked there normally but you'd have thought there would be some special discretion.

"We have spoken to the county council and I hope they will do something about this."

A Leicestershire County Council spokesman said: "We are reviewing the ticket and looking carefully at the reasons the driver has given for parking on the zig-zag lines next to a pedestrian crossing."

Whatever the outcome of the parking penalty review, the warden may have upset someone special.

"Santa was absolutely shocked," said Chris. "He said the warden should be put on the naughty list and get a lump of coal for Christmas."

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Santa Muerte: Patron Saint of the Drug War

A A A Comments ( ) By John Nova Lomax Wednesday, Sep 12 2012
Wednesday, Sep 12 2012

houstonpress.com

Santa Muerte: Patron Saint of the Drug War

Need help killing someone? Or cementing a drug deal? This may be the saint for you.

Sunny Flea Market on Airline Drive is as full of raw life as any place in the state of Texas, especially on this hot Sunday afternoon in August. Fifty thousand weekly visitors stroll its long rows of covered market stalls, where more than 1,000 vendors offer a cradle-to-grave bonanza of blue-collar Mexican-American life.

There's birth, childhood and school: Parents can find used car-seats, cribs and blankets for their infants, while their older brothers and sisters can be fitted for school uniforms or beg for secondhand video games, or ride live ponies, or frolic on carousels and a merry-go-round — all the while listening to the hypnotic high-hat hiss of *cumbias* to beery oompah *banda* sounds to romantic *ranchero* ballads.

Santa Muerte is all over Houston, if you know where to look. She's on the shelves at most Fiesta stores, ruling over her very own dedicated botánicas, and vying for your attention alongside the Pope, Jesus and a drunken deer at an Airline Drive flea market.

Photos by Daniel Kramer

Santa Muerte is all over Houston, if you know where to look. She's on the shelves at most Fiesta stores, ruling over her very own dedicated *botánicas*, and vying for your attention alongside the Pope, Jesus and a drunken deer at an Airline Drive flea market.

Maria stands beside her public Santa Muerte altar inside her Sharpstown botánica. The Veracruz-born Santa Muerte priestess keeps another altar in her office and a truly awe-inspiring one in her back room. She

Daniel Kramer

Maria stands beside her public Santa Muerte altar inside her Sharpstown *botánica*. The Veracruz-born Santa Muerte priestess keeps another altar in her office and a truly awe-inspiring one in her back room. She won't allow that one to be photographed. "It's my religion," she

won't allow that one to be photographed. "It's my religion," she says. Click here to see a video interview with Maria.

says. Click here to see a video interview with Maria.

One stall is piled high with wire cages in which fuzzy Chihuahua pups tremble and with their limpid brown eyes implore children for a forever home, while parrots, macaws and parakeets squawk and iguanas flick their tongues in others nearby. A vendor allows a ring-tailed lemur to clamber up his arm and down his back, its piercing stare encapsulating a journey to a primordial Madagascar jungle.

And if you know where to look, everywhere there is death — more specifically, the Grim Reaper-like visage of *Santa Muerte* ("Saint Death" or "Holy Death"). The increasingly popular, scythe-wielding folk saint, miracle worker and unofficial patron of many of Mexico's *narcos*, prostitutes, prisoners, poor, gays, transvestites and others on the margins of Mexico's Drug War-ravaged, poverty-stricken society is all around. She is found on clothing: A twentysomething man sports her on a T-shirt, on which rests the head of his sleeping infant, nestled in a front-slung harness. Another man honors the veiled skeleton with a chunky gold pendant around his bull-neck.

And then there's the jackpot: an entire stall given over to Santa Muerte devotion. Here, devotees of (as she is variously known) "*La Madrina*" ("the Godmother"), "*La Flaka*" (a slang spelling for "the Skinny Woman") or "*La Niña Blanca*" ("the White Lady") can buy candles, statues, posters and amulets for her veneration.

The stallholders — Jonathan Mejia and Eduardo Mora, two men who look no older than 20 — say she grants many wishes, in many different areas of life. All you have to do is ask, light the right color of candle to her and then make a sacrifice. (You also need to make sure Santa Muerte is wearing a matching-color robe, though adherents say this is less important than the correct color of candle.)

"I don't know all the colors, but red is for love. You give her wine, money, food," says Mora. "Gold is for money, green is for health."

Asked about the supposedly death-dealing black candle, the one that can be used to wreak vengeance and downfall on your enemies, Mora shrugs. "I don't know about that. We do run out of them fast." (Police say that black candles are found far more often in the private shrines of drug dealers and assassins than they are at Santa Muerte's increasingly common public altars.)

And it's not just enemies from whom Santa Muerte can extract a heavy toll, even the ultimate price.

"There's a downside," Mejia says. "When you ask her for something, you have to promise her something. If you don't make that promise, um...many people say she takes away one of your loved ones."

In the last ten years, this harshest of all mistresses has come gliding inexorably from the

shadows of Mexican folk religion, far from what scholars believe was her birthplace on or near Mexico's central Gulf Coast. As recently as 12 years ago, most Mexicans had never heard of her, but now her cult is spreading beyond the borders of that country, both south to Central America and north to the United States, where one expert tells us that some of her adherents today are white and black Anglos.

In spite of official rejection by the highest levels of the Roman Catholic Church in Mexico, Santa Muerte's followers only increase in number and devotion, carrying her all the way onto the fringes of the American pop-culture mainstream. She made a cameo on *Breaking Bad* — Tuco's terrifying cousins light candles to her, petitioning her for success on the way to Albuquerque on their mission of murderous revenge.

The faithful adore her publicly at shrines all over Mexico. People pray to her on her Facebook page, and there are drives afoot in several cities, Houston included, to raise funds to build permanent public chapels in her honor. Houstonians can buy her votive candles not just at barrio *yerberías* and *botánicas*, but also at their friendly neighborhood Fiesta supermarket or Dollar Tree store.

Mexican bishops have said her veneration is akin to Satanism, and Mexican prosecutors claim that Santa Muerte has been linked to cartel-related human sacrifices.

Others say her scythe is not just a weapon but also a shield: They see her as a bringer of comfort in dark times, a beacon of peace in dark times.

One thing is for sure: Santa Muerte is here to stay. Some concerned Catholics even believe that she is at war with Our Lady of Guadalupe herself for status as unofficial queen of Mexican souls.

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San Francisco St. Nick robs bank during SantaCon

RACHELLE BLIDNER

nydailynews.com

A man dressed as Santa robbed a Union Square bank as hundreds of people roamed the streets in similar costumes for the annual holiday pub crawl.

BY Rachelle Blidner
NEW YORK DAILY NEWS
Thursday, December 18, 2014, 9:13 PM

San Francisco Police Department

San Francisco Police Department

This alleged bad Santa blended into the crowd of people dressed as holiday characters, like those on the street behind him, Saturday.

Russel A. Daniels/ASSOCIATED PRESS

People, dressed in a variety of costumes, congregate in front of the Gold Dust Lounge during the SantaCon pub crawl in downtown San Francisco in 2009.
San Francisco Police Department

He was one bad Santa.

A man dressed as St. Nick robbed a San Francisco bank Saturday as hundreds of people stumbled on the streets in holiday costumes for SantaCon, an annual pub crawl, police said.

Police are looking for the thief who got a sack full of cash after handing a bank teller a note that said he had a gun.

Bank-goers at 400 Sutter St. did not see a firearm, Sgt. Monica MacDonald said.

Santa bolted with his goodies and blended into the look-alikes roaming the city.

"Any other day, Santa would have stood out, but that day Santa was everywhere," MacDonald told the Los Angeles Times.

This bad Santa stands at 6 feet and is between 40 or 50 years old, police said.

rblidner@nydailynews.com

Sasquatch Artifact Returned To First Nations - Who Forted? Magazine

By Chris Savia on May 26, 2014

whofortedblog.com

mask

Long before the Wallace brothers had the bright idea to leave fake tracks 'round Bluff Creek, Native Americans held legends of sasquatch sacred, considering a mutual sighting between man and cryptid to be good luck.

A Sasq'ets mask that vanished 75 years ago1 has been returned to the Sts'ailes First Nation. J.W. Burns, the original squatcher, took advantage of their good nature, lifting this artifact for his personal collection. James Leon, an antiquarian attending the repatriation event for a different artifact, ended up next to a lady who had seen an ape mask fringed with bear fur at the Vancouver Museum. The mask had been part of a travelling display, and now it's coming home.

Of particular interest is the mask's similarity to an ape. The broad flat nose, the prognathous jaw, among other details just scream *this is not human*. With no known native primates in North America, how the heck could Native Americans create something so apelike? Imagination is one explanation, but this relic may be taking a cue from real life.

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Satanic Display At Florida State Capitol Damaged, Woman In Custody

The Huffington Post | By Paige Lavender huffingtonpost.com

Posted: 12/23/2014 1:54 pm EST Updated: 12/23/2014 7:59 pm EST

A woman is in custody for damaging a holiday display placed at the Florida statehouse by a satanist group, according to the Tallahassee Democrat and WCTV.

The display -- a religious diorama that featured an angel falling from heaven into hell -- was placed in the Florida capitol by the Satanic Temple. Both the Florida Department of Law Enforcement and a spokesman for the Satanic Temple confirmed to WCTV that the display had been damaged.

According to Reuters, the display was quickly restored.

Earlier this month, Satanic Temple spokesperson Lucien Greaves told The Huffington Post a similar diorama from the group was rejected by the Florida Department of Management Services for display in the state capitol for being “grossly offensive." He said this year's display was a win for those who seek to include all views during the holidays.

"We think that our holiday display sends an affirmative message of inclusiveness and plurality," Greaves said.

In addition to the Florida statehouse, the Satanic Temple also has a holiday display placed in the Michigan statehouse.

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A year later, Satanic Temple display debuts at Florida Capitol

2014-12-22 sun-sentinel.com

TALLAHASSEE — The Satanic Temple put up a crudely made diorama in the entry rotunda of Florida's Capitol on Monday.

The falling-angel diorama, which a year ago was barred from the Capitol because it was deemed "grossly offensive" by the Department of Management Services, is the latest in a series of irreverent holiday displays from groups motivated by the state's acceptance of Christian nativity scenes the past two years.

John Porgal, a Tallahassee resident and member of the Satanic Temple, said the group threatened legal action this year if it again was blocked. It also offered not to put up its display if the Florida Prayer Network and International House of Prayer Tallahassee wouldn't put up their nativity scenes.

"We don't want to be insulting," Porgal said. "We just want our rights, the separation of church and states or equal rights."

The group's name, the Satanic Temple, is simply to draw attention to its efforts. "The Satanic Temple does not worship the devil in any way, shape or form," Porgal said when asked.

The temple's display this year joined entries from the American Atheists of Tallahassee, the Madison, Wis.-based Freedom From Religion Foundation, the Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster, and a South Florida political blogger who for the second year put up a 6-foot stack of empty beer cans to represent Festivus, a sitcom-based festival "for the rest of us."

In reaction to the glut of holiday display applications this year, the department imposed a new seven-day timeline for items put up in the rotunda. Applicants face a fine starting at $100 if a display remains after its scheduled removal date.

The Florida Prayer Network's nativity, which went up Dec. 15, was taken down Monday. Nearby a framed poster of the nativity by the International House of Prayer Tallahassee was put up Monday.

Both groups are represented by Pam Olsen, who questioned the motives of those opposed to the nativity scene but said she supports the open forum for holiday displays.

"They're here to shut down Christianity," Olsen said. "They're fighting for the separation of church and state. That's what their whole premise is. They're here to fight the display of Christ and Christmas. Whether we have a display here or not, guess what, Christ is in Christmas."

Copyright (c) 2014Orlando Sentinel

Scientists Discover That Drunk Birds Sing Like Drunks

December 28, 2014

npr.org

Liza Gross/Courtesy Public Library of Science hide caption i toggle caption i toggle caption Liza Gross/Courtesy Public Library of Science Recent research has shown that zebra finches sing differently when drunk, but not whether they know enough of the lyrics to get through "I Will Survive" or "Don't Stop Believin'." Liza Gross/Courtesy Public Library of Science

Recent research has shown that zebra finches sing differently when drunk, but not whether they know enough of the lyrics to get through "I Will Survive" or "Don't Stop Believin'."

If you've ever listened to karaoke at a bar, you know that drinking can affect how well someone can sing. Christopher Olson and his colleagues at Oregon Health and Science University recently set out to find if the same was true for birds, specifically zebra finches.

"We just showed up in the morning and mixed a little bit of juice with 6 percent alcohol, and put it in their water bottles and put it in the cages," Olson told *All Things Considered*'s Arun Rath. "At first we were thinking that they wouldn't drink on their own because, you know, a lot of animals just won't touch the stuff. But they seem to tolerate it pretty well and be somewhat willing to consume it."

The finches long have been used as a model to study human vocal learning, or how people learn to communicate using language, Olson said. Obviously, alcohol affects human speech, so Olson and his team checked for similar problems with the birds.

The blood alcohol levels achieved — .05 to .08 percent — would be laughed off by many college students, but because birds metabolize alcohol differently it was plenty to produce the effects the scientists were looking for.

Listen to the audio, and you'll hear that the finches' song gets a bit quieter and just a little slurred, or as Olson puts it, "a bit less organized in their sound production" — like a roommate calling from a bar to get a ride home.

In the future, Olson wants to find out whether alcohol affects not just how birds sing but how they learn new songs — like a roommate partying so late he's still drunk in class the next morning.

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Scientists Splice Jellyfish to Create a Flock of Glowing Rave Sheep - Who Forted? Magazine

By Greg Newkirk on May 2, 2013

whofortedblog.com

glowingsheep

For the last few years, scientists in Uruguay have tirelessly worked towards the goal of creating glowing sheep, a project that aims to make the flocks easier to keep track of in the dark, resulting in fewer losses to rural shepherds whose entire livelihoods are tied to the safety of their animals.

Just kidding about that last part. They're actually doing it because they can (and probably because they've run out of things to do in South America's 2nd smallest country).

The Institute of Animal Reproduction Uruguay were thrilled to announce their achievement, telling reporters that the flock of odd sheep spliced with jellyfish genes were born six months ago, and have since been happy, healthy, and otherwise normal animals.

"We did not use a protein of medical interest or to help with a particular medicine because we wanted to fine-tune the technique," Alejo Menchaca, head of the research team, told *Nature World News*. "We used the green protein because the color is easily identifiable in the sheep's tissues."

Glowing animals are not anything new in the scientific community, but these phosphorescent sheep are the first of their kind in Latin America, particularly in a place known for it's cattle production. Despite their current popularity, the researchers have stated that the sheep will go on to lead normal lives. Well, as normal as a glowing sheep can have, anyway.

1 Comment

1. That should make it allot harder for feral dogs foxes and wolves to pick them off.

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break her neck rather than return as angry as she was. The wish came to pass and Peg O'Nell returned as an angry NYMPH set to punish those who wished her dead and everyone in the parish. Chickens disappeared, calves were born deformed, cows fell sick, and young adults fell sick. In order to appease the water fairy every seven years a good, sound, living sacrifice had to be made to her well.

Sources: Henderson, *Notes on the Folk-Lore of the Northern Counties of England*, 265; Monaghan, *Encyclopedia of Celtic Mythology and Folklore*, 377; Parkinson, *Yorkshire Legends and Traditions*, 106–07

Peg Powler

One of the many NURSERY BOGIES of British folklore, Peg Powler is believed to live in the warm water wells supported by the River Tees. Said to be bottomless and referred to as "Hell's Kettles" these wells are where the green haired Peg Powler, just like JENNY GREENTEETH of Lancashire, hunts for her prey, children, who venture too close to the edge of her watery domain; she was especially active on Sundays. It is possible this fairy being was once worshiped as a river goddess who was offered human sacrifices.

The foam that gathers on the stream's surface is called Peg Powler's suds, implying she is doing her laundry; the scum that accumulates on the surface is known as Peg Powler's Cream, the run-off of her sloppily milking her cow.

Sources: Briggs, *Encyclopedia of Fairies*, 323; Monaghan, *Encyclopedia of Celtic Mythology and Folklore*, 377; Spence, *Minor Traditions of British Mythology*, 13, 23

Pegaea

Variation: Pegaia, Pegaia

A NAIAD from classical Greek mythology Pegaea ("she of the springs") was one of the four NYMPHS of the healing springs of the river Kytheros in Elis, located in southern Greece. Col-

Sources: Avant, *Mythological Reference*, 295; Conner, *Everything Classical Mythology Book*, 17, 276; Maberry, *Cryptopedia*, 112

Pegasis

A NYMPH of a spring of the river Grenikos in the Troad, Anatolia, Pegasis was loved by the Trojan prince, Emathion and described by the ancient Roman poet, Ovid, as being "fair-tressed."

Sources: Ovid, *Ovid*, 142; Parada, *Genealogical Guide to Greek Mythology*, 32

Peirene

Peirene was a NYMPH of the spring Peirene in the town of Korinthos located in southern Greece; the NAIAD was a daughter of the Spartan, Oilbalos. Peirene loved by the god of the sea, Poseidon (Neptune). When her son, Kenchrias, died, Peirene wept so heavily she transformed into a fountain.

Sources: Irving, *Metamorphosis in Greek Myths*, 301; Larson, *Greek Nymphs*, 307

Peisinoe

In classical Greek mythology, Peisinoe ("persuading the mind") was one of the named SIRENS, a type of malicious NYMPH born the offspring of the ancient sea god, Phorcys. Half bird and half woman, she and her sisters would perch on the rocky Sicilian coastline and lure in sailor with their melodious song; once caught, their prey were eaten alive. Although they hunted the coastline, Peisinoe and her kind lived inland in a meadow.

Sources: Austern, *Music of the Sirens*, 40; Hard, *Library of Greek Mythology*, 167; Monaghan, *Encyclopedia of Goddesses and Heroines*, 434

Peitho

Variations: Suada

Born one of the 3,000 daughters of the Titians, Oceanus and Tethys, Peitho ("winning eloquence") was one of the named OCEANIDS al-

Kettles" these wells are where the green haired Peg Powler, just like JENNY GREENTEETH of Lancashire, hunts for her prey, children, who venture too close to the edge of her watery domain; she was especially active on Sundays. It is possible this fairy being was once worshiped as a river goddess who was offered human sacrifices.

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Pegaea

Variation: Pegaia, Pegaia

A NAIAD from classical Greek mythology Pegaea ("she of the springs") was one of the four NYMPHS of the healing springs of the river Kytheros in Elis, located in southern Greece. Collectively they were known as the IODINES and they names were CALLIPHAEA, IASIS, PEGAEA, and SYNALLAXIS and it was believed to bathe in one of their springs was a cure-all for an array of illnesses and pains.

Sources: Larson, *Greek Nymphs*, 158; Pausanias, *Commentary on Book I: Attica*, 319

Pegaeae

Variations: The Pegaiai

The pegaeae were a sub-species of the NAIADS, they are the NYMPHS of fresh water springs and fountains in classical Greek mythology.

into a fountain.

Sources: Irving, *Metamorphosis in Greek Myths*, 301; Larson, *Greek Nymphs*, 307

Peisinoe

In classical Greek mythology, Peisinoe ("persuading the mind") was one of the named SIRENS, a type of malicious NYMPH born the offspring of the ancient sea god, Phorcys. Half bird and half woman, she and her sisters would perch on the rocky Sicilian coastline and lure in sailor with their melodious song; once caught, their prey were eaten alive. Although they hunted the coastline, Peisinoe and her kind lived inland in a meadow.

Sources: Austern, *Music of the Sirens*, 40; Hard, *Library of Greek Mythology*, 167; Monaghan, *Encyclopedia of Goddesses and Heroines*, 434

Peitho

Variations: Suada

Born one of the 3,000 daughters of the Titians, Oceanus and Tethys, Peitho ("winning eloquence") was one of the named OCEANIDS although some sources say she was the minor goddess of the persuasive tricks of love born the daughter of the goddess of love, Aphrodite (Venus) and the god, Hermes (Mercury), who by nature was tricky.

Sources: Hesiod, *Theogony*, 113; Monaghan, *Encyclopedia of Goddesses and Heroines*, 428; Westmoreland, *Ancient Greek Beliefs*, 24

Peloris

Variations: Pelorias

Peloris was a NYMPH of Sicily in Greek mythology.

The hypnotic and "magical" aptitude of women is chiefly a fact of their organisation. But its development in the past has certainly been favoured by the wonder excited by the physical mystery of womanhood, to which reference was made in Chapter I. Women in savage and barbarous stages of existence are believed to have a strange influence over the whole of nature. Thus Pliny (*Natural History*, Book vii. c. 13) tells us that "on the approach of a woman in this state [the menstrual], meat will become sour, seeds which are touched by her become sterile, grafts wither away, garden-plants are withered up, and the fruit will fall from the tree beneath which she sits," etc. At Bordeaux and on the Rhine women must still avoid entering wine-cellars during their periods. (A. Bastian in the "Vorwort," and notes to his *Inselgruppen in Oceanien*, Berlin, 1883, has collected a large number of similar beliefs.) It was not only when in this state that a woman possessed this magical influence; in another part of his work (Book xxviii. c. 23) Pliny writes:—"Hailstorms, they say, whirlwinds, and lightning even, will be scared away by a woman uncovering her body while her monthly courses are upon her. The same, too, with all other kinds of tempestuous weather; and out at sea a storm may be lulled by a woman uncovering her body merely, even though not menstruating at the time. At any other time, also, if a woman strips herself naked while she is menstruating, and walks round a field of wheat, the caterpillars, worms, beetles, and other vermin will fall from off the ears of corn." Many of these beliefs survive in Italy (and in other parts of the world) up to the present day; thus at Belluno, according to Bastanzi, it is customary for a priest and for a naked young girl to go (separately as a rule) early in the morning into the fields to drive away the caterpillars. (The introduction of the priest is merely an example of the way in which Christianity has sought to sanctify the Pagan rites it could not eradicate.) Similar customs may be found all over the world. Thus the wonder excited by women has in the past, if not in the present, powerfully reinforced the influence they have gained through what I have here broadly termed "hypnotic phenomena."

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A large part of the fascination which women possess for men lies in their liability to such hypnotic explosions as we have here to consider. It has been a mystery which men have never grown tired of contemplating, and which has left an ineffaceable mark on the literature produced by men.

The mystery has been sympathetically described by Diderot, who himself combined the man's temperament and the

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skirt and apron, however, are mahrime and will pollute food by contact. Misolino started telling us about some women in the hamlet that made their men mahrime by letting the blood from their… . He could not finish the sentence because of excuses, and then Anabela told him to keep quiet. She went on explaining that when washing clothes, men's clothes should be washed first, then women and children's. Everything that is connected with food, like napkins, tablecloths etc., must be washed before clothes. Then they both started talking about gaže, who do not separate these items, but wash everything in the same tub together and even use the same tub for food and clothes; 'But of course the gaže have no shame'.

The Dangerous Blood

I take this silence on the subject of mahrime to indicate its centrality and power among the hamlet Roma, but also ambiguity. Avoiding referring explicitly to it may be understood as a protective discretion, but it may also be explained in terms of the hamlet Roma's perceived shortcomings in adhering to the code (Stewart, 1997: 210). The explanations given to me suggest that menstruation and menstrual blood are connected to destruction, expressed by Anabela and Varga as 'taking away the luck and spirit of men'. Menstrual blood should be separated from contact, symbolically and materially, with men or anything belonging to males and even food in general. The idea that menstrual blood is destructive especially of men's power and luck, while the blood shed in childbirth is constructive, is widespread and found in different societies across the world (Abu-ughod, 1986; Counihan, 1999; Turner, 1967). This interpretation sheds light on the hamlet discourse on the dangerous relations between female substances, foremost menstrual blood, and maleness, or more accurately: men's prosperity. The idea that menstruation is dangerous to men of course has many meanings and possible interpretations. The hamlet discourse on this subject expresses, however, almost explicitly, that by menstruation women have the power to reject the male creative substances. I suggest this also may be seen as a rejection of maleness and possibly of men's power in general. Thus menstrual blood is equated to death, rejection of life, and is thus both powerful, dangerous and polluting, but not in its own right. It is primarily in combination with male life-giving power that menstruation is dangerous: in married women. Menstrual blood and other female bodily substances from unmarried or sexually inactive girls are not treated as dangerous or polluting. I see the idea of women as inherently 'bad' and less honourable than men as an expression of these ideas of menstruation as rejection of male creative powers. But not all blood is dangerous, because it is powerful it may also protect against danger. The colour red, signifying the power of blood, is used as a protective device in the hamlet. Red strings of wool are tied around infants' wrists and in the manes of horses to protect them from the evil eye, as is customary among villagers in general. The essential knowledge is that menstruation, seen as the destructive aspects of women's power, must be separated from the constructive aspects of men's power.

That Which is Separated

These are my interpretations; the Roma do not say more than I have already quoted. The fact that ideas of menstruation as polluting are old and widespread[4] suggests that they have developed under socio-economic circumstances when women seldom menstruated after marriage. Like most hamlet women today, women in earlier societies were generally pregnant most of their mature lives and several years of breastfeeding often prevented menstruation until the next pregnancy. Thus menstruation was probably an exception equated to abortion, not regular as among modern non-Gypsy women.

The notion of 'mahrime' is interpreted and practised differently among different groups of Roma according to their past and present social, cultural and political conditions and environment. Most scholars analysing Roma in Western societies have focused on the defilement aspect of mahrime, while my own position is that the separation aspect of mahrime has been underanalysed and should be given more analytical attention.[5] As we have seen, the hamlet Roma only very rarely refer to the concept explicitly, but when they do they generally speak of it in terms of separation: to 'mahrime' oneself out of the society, to separate clothes in washing, not to sit on buckets and so forth. The discourse on shame and shameful behaviour is thus an expression of the morally competent person, the true Rom, the person that knows how to separate the good from the bad. Mahrime, ritual defilement and separation are implicit elements of this discourse, notions too powerful to express explicitly (Stewart, 1997; Williams, 1985).[6] A woman's honour is dependent on her knowledge of the rules of separation, but it is balanced against her roles as nurturer and provider. Although asymmetric, the mutual dependency between men and women in the cosmological order is openly expressed in daily life. By keeping these rules of separation, men and women may interact rather freely, and women avoid being shameless and thus avoid shaming men.

Gender Politics

As Thulo said: 'Mahrime is a bad thing; it is about politics'. Thus the sense of shame and knowledge about proper rituals of separations are not regarded as evenly distributed among the Roma. Just like Romanes the language, also romanimo the cosmology is disputed among different

come." Unterman tells of one woman who came to him with the complaint that despite her unclean state, her husband had forced himself on her sexually. The rabbi comments, "In my humble opinion, the cause of such unbridled behavior is due to modern conditions of life, which both incite and nauseate."[4]

We have mentioned the Mae Enga belief that contact with a menstruating woman can make a man vomit, can "kill" his blood, waste his flesh, darken his skin, ruin his "vital juices," and "dull his wits." A South African clan believes that intercourse with a menstruating woman will make a man's bones get soft. In most cases, the punishment and physical suffering accompanying the violation of the intramenstrual taboo are borne by the male members of the community. That sexual intercourse during the period is of danger to *men* is the dominant belief of the forty primitive societies studied by William Stephens in 1961. It is also a dominant belief in European culture.

In the nineteenth century, it was widely thought that a male could get gonorrhea from contact with a menstruating woman. There seems to be a confusion between gonorrhea and such infections as trichomoniasis, both of which can be communicated to a man by a woman and vice versa. Trichomoniasis does become worse during menstruation because of lower vaginal acidity, but its most noticeable symptom is itching, not death or insanity. Augustus Kinsley Gardner, author of *Conjugal Sins* (1870), saw menstrual blood as corrupt and virulent, threatening an unwitting penis with "disease,""excoriations," and "blenorrhagias." ("Blenorrhagia" is now known as gonorrhea.) Another nineteenth-century idea was that the menstruating woman was likely, during intercourse, to regain from a man's lifeblood what she herself was losing.[5]

In the twentieth century, man's punishment from menstrual intercourse is said to be a disease called urethritis, an inflammation of the urethra, the duct that conveys both urine and semen. Such attacks are not very common, however; it is the rare medical practitioner who encounters a case. According to the best evidence available today, coitus during menstruation is generally harmless for men.

If men are free from the dangers of soft bones, vomiting, or venereal disease during menstrual intercourse, women are similarly unthreatened. In fact, menstrual intercourse is good for women because it temporarily relieves cramps by increasing the flow. Yet, it has long been argued in medical circles that the combination of menstruation and intercourse is harmful for a woman. Soranus (second century A.D.) writes that it should be avoided because the uterus is already "overburdened and is in an unresponsive state because of the ingress of material and incapable of carrying two motions contrary to each other, one for the excretion of material, the other for receiving."[6]

A 1935 sex manual implies that during her period a woman is sick anyway and that she could get even sicker from indulging in sexual activities. "The female sexual organs are more or less congested, therefore more irritated and subject to pain, and vigorous sex relations would no doubt cause a greater loss of blood by increasing the menstrual hemorrhage."[7]

Women seem to have accepted these pseudoscientific taboos. In a study of 109 women conducted in 1950, most reasons for abstinence listed by the participants had to do with a fear that intercourse during menstruation would be physically harmful, that it might lead to "hemorrhage, injury, or infection."[8] Even today, the most commonly argued reason is medical: The woman does have a decrease in vaginal acidity during her period and is at this time more likely to get vaginitis.

Among aboriginal peoples, a woman is occasionally in real physical danger for having violated the intramenstrual taboo. Among the Reindeer Chukchi, it was believed that a woman would eventually become sterile because of such action. In anthropological writings, there is the rare example of a woman suffering irregular menstruation as punishment for having intercourse with a harmful "hot" male (one whose blood is not cooled down). But this belief, found among the Kgatia of Beuchanaland,[9] is the only example we could find in any culture of a male's blood being the cause of a female's illness.

The consensus of contemporary medical experts is best expressed in this statement from a 1969 article: "There appears to be no established reason to abstain from coitus during the menses on patho-physiologic grounds."[10] Those who do abstain for such stated reasons are either ill informed or masking a deeper cultural dread of woman's blood.

A lesser fear is that intercourse during menstruation can harm the potential child. The Romans attributed the deformity of the god Vulcan to menstrual intercourse between Juno and Jupiter. In France, it was long believed that an infant conceived during the menses would be "puny, languid, and moribund, subject to an infinity of fetid maladies, foul and stinking as a result of the matter from which it was conceived." The child would be subject to a number of horrible diseases, among them leprosy, syphilis, scrofula, and virulent ulcers of the skin. Mentally, it would be "entirely stupid, dull, loutish, silly, deprived of sense and understanding, and entirely unskilled to do anything good."[11]

Daily News - Feb 18. 1998 Browse this newspaper » Browse all newspapers »

Killer blows kiss to vampire 'sire'

Testimony could conclude today in Fla. courtroom

By MIKE SCHNEIDER
The Associated Press

TAVARES, Fla. — Rod Ferrell blew a kiss to Steven Murphy, the man who helped the confessed killer become a vampire two years ago, as he walked past the defense table.

Murphy gave jurors considering whether to send Ferrell to the electric chair a glimpse Thursday of what it means to be a vampire.

Vampires don't abhor crosses, garlic or daylight, Murphy said.

"We don't have an idol or a god," said Murphy, 19, of Murray, Ky.

They do, however, have cravings for each other's blood. It was during a blood-sucking ritual in a cemetery two years ago that Murphy "crossed over" Ferrell into a vampire.

"I took out a blade and cut my arm and he took from me," Murphy told jurors during Ferrell's sentencing hearing. "He cut himself and I took from him and we sat in meditation for a few hours."

Murphy said he told Ferrell the rules of vampirism. Vampires never kill and never take the blood of another person without their permission.

Murphy said he and Ferrell became involved with vampirism because they felt like they were outcasts in high school in Murray. They and their friends played role-playing games, such as Vampire Masquerade, that involved dressing up and could last from dusk to dawn.

"Life in general is pretty dull and boring," he said. "We used that game for escape just like going to the movies."

By crossing over Ferrell, who took a vampire name "Vassago," Murphy became his "sire," or Ferrell's master, and became responsible for his actions.

Those actions included killing Richard Wendorf and Naoma Queen, the parents of one of the members of Ferrell's vampire cult, in November 1996 in their Eustis home, 35 miles northwest of Orlando.

Ferrell, 17, of Murray pleaded guilty to their first-degree murders two weeks ago. Prosecutors said Ferrell came to Florida from Kentucky to help the couple's daughter, Heather Wendorf, run away and steal her parents' Ford Explorer. A jury is deciding whether to recommend life in prison or the electric chair.

Testimony was expected to wrap up today and jurors were expected to begin their deliberations.

Murphy, however, said Ferrell's involvement with vampire rituals had nothing to do with the killings.

"He did not bleed the bodies," Murphy said outside the courthouse. "There was no bloodletting."

AP/Orta Livingston

Steven Murphy answers a prosecutor's question of whether he has vampire fangs by opening his mouth and sticking out his tongue in a Florida courtroom. Murphy said he and confessed killer Rod Ferrell became involved with vampirism because they felt like they were outcasts in high school in Murray.

DEATH

Bernice Winston Askew

LEWISBURG — Bernice Winston Askew, 76, of Dunmor died at 10:30 p.m. Feb. 18, 1998, at Veterans Administration Hospital in Nashville, Tenn.

The Logan County native was a television repairman and a World War II Army veteran. He was a son of the late Bernice Askew and Vera Askew and the husband of the late Loreen Belcher Askew.

Funeral will be at 2 p.m. Saturday at Price Funeral Home with burial in Dunmor Cemetery. Visitation will begin at 5 p.m. today at the funeral home.

Survivors include two daughters, Patty Hocker of Bowling Green and Maudean Stratton of Lewisburg; two grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren.

Agnes A. Bedell

Agnes A. Bedell, 77, of Bowling Green died at 7:20 a.m. Feb. 20, 1998, at The Medical Center.

The Lawrence, Mass., native was a homemaker and a member of St. James United Methodist Church. She was a daughter of the late Robert B. Otto and Eva Mae Hart Otto.

Funeral will be at 1:30 p.m. Monday at Johnson-Vaughn Funeral Home with burial in Fairview Cemetery. Visitation will be from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday at the funeral home.

Expressions of sympathy may take the form of donations to St. James United Methodist Church, 575 Winfield Drive, Bowling Green, Ky. 42103.

Survivors include her husband, John W. Bedell; two daughters, Lois Mae Bente and Roberta Jean Dene, both of Bowling Green; and six grandchildren.

Jewell Carter

Funeral for Jewell Carter, 88, of Bowling Green, who died Feb. 18, 1998, at The Medical Center, will

One injured in Nashville Road crash

Auditor finds a growing deficit

Vampire game spurs bizarre fringe groups

Role-playing teens accused of murders

By TED BRIDIS
Associated Press Writer

First, they played with dice. Then, they formed clubs, started dressing up like vampires and staged productions. Eventually, police said, some players began drinking blood.

Five teen-agers, who police believe became attracted to vampires because of a role-playing game, are accused in the beating deaths in Florida of one the suspects' parents. The arrests cast a spotlight on an underground vampire culture, much of it evolved from the best-selling game, Vampire: The Masquerade.

The game, which has sold more than 500,000 copies since its 1991 creation, has its own jargon, hierarchy and dress.

The more serious players belong to clans—the Tremere or the Assamite Antitribu. Women submit to sires. They casually mention omens like the Coming of Gehenna. But it's all harmless fun, some players say.

"First of all, what kind of pathetic idiots torture puppies and bash their parents to death? This doesn't follow any tenant of vampiric belief," Marjean Stewart of Denton, Texas, wrote in an Internet discussion area on vampires.

Police in Murray, Ky., the hometown of four of the suspects, said they believe the slayings may have evolved from the youths' involvement in the game.

'What are we? We are vampires, and that is enough,' the game advertises. 'No one holds command over me. . . . What is a claim of power for ones who defy death? Call your damnable hunt. We shall see whom I drag screaming to hell with me.'

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Authorities haven't contacted the game's publisher, White Wolf Inc. of Atlanta.

"I doubt seriously there's going to be any tie between these individuals, who were very disturbed, and our role-playing game," company spokesman Greg Fountain said.

Masquerade was patterned after the popular Dungeons & Dragons game of the 1980s, and now is second in popularity only to D&D, White Wolf said.

Masquerade is no longer played around a table. Players act out roles in full vampire garb, usually at night on city streets, said J. Gordon Melton, who spent four years studying vampire culture and runs the Institute for the Study of American Religion in Santa Barbara, Calif.

"Instead of a group of people sitting around and rolling dice, the dice have been eliminated, costumes have been added and staging has been added," Melton said. "It's quite an event."

Four of the teen-agers await extradition from Louisiana, where all five suspects were arrested Thanksgiving night. The lone adult suspect, 19-year-old Dana Cooper, was returned Tuesday to Florida to face murder charges.

She seemed solemn, tired and pale as she was denied bond yesterday in Tavares, Fla. She appeared before a judge by video camera from jail, and no court date was set.

One of the suspects, Roderick Ferrell, 16, had lived in Eustis, Fla., where he met 15-year-old Heather Wendorf. He and three other teens from Kentucky went to Eustis where they allegedly bludgeoned Wendorf's parents.

The group fled in the Wendorfs' vehicle and were caught in Baton Rouge, La., after the parents of one of the teens called police, authorities said.

Authorities believe Ferrell also was involved in a break-in this fall at an animal shelter in which two puppies were mutilated.

His mother, Sondra Gibson, faces charges of solicitation to commit rape. She wrote a sexually explicit letter to a 14-year-old boy, urging him "to become a Vampire, a part of the family immortal" and asking him to become "my sire," police said.

Police in Kentucky say the youths drank their own blood and that of mutilated animals. Most players don't drink blood, which ciated with a fringe gro Gothics, Melton said. "Ma when they get around to blood, are too afraid and the taste," he said.

Murder suspect Dana Lynn Cooper, 19, of Murray, Ky., is escorted to the Lake County Jail in Tavares, Fla., Tuesday night. She is the lone adult suspect in the vampire cult slayings of Richard and Naomi Wendorf in Eustis, Fla.

Women more inclined than men to nurture nature, poll conclud

By SCOTT SONNER
Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON—Most Americans

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ASSOCIATED PRESS

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The game, which has sold more than 500,000 copies since its 1991 creation, has its own jargon, hierarchy and dress.

The more serious players belong to clans—the Tremere or the Assamite Antitribu. Women submit to sires. They casually mention omens like the Coming of Gehenna. But it's all harmless fun, some players say.

"First of all, what kind of pathetic idiots torture puppies and bash their parents to death? This doesn't follow any tenant of vampiric belief," Marjean Stewart of Denton, Texas, wrote in an Internet discussion area on vampires.

Police in Murray, Ky., the hometown of four of the suspects, said they believe the slayings may have evolved from the youths' involvement in the game.

'What are we? We are vampires, and that is enough,' the game advertises. 'No one holds command over me. . . . What is a claim of power for ones who defy death? Call your damnable hunt. We shall see whom I drag screaming to hell with me.'

"What are we? We are vampires, and that is enough," the game advertises. "No one holds command over me. . . . What is a claim of power for ones who defy death? Call your damnable hunt. We shall see whom I drag screaming to hell with me."

Authorities haven't contacted the game's publisher, White Wolf Inc. of Atlanta.

"I doubt seriously there's going to be any tie between those individuals, who were very disturbed, and our role-playing game," company spokesman Greg Fountain said.

Masquerade was patterned after the popular Dungeons & Dragons game of the 1980s, and now is second in popularity only to D&D, White Wolf said.

Masquerade is no longer played around a table. Players act out roles in full vampire garb, usually at night on city streets, said J. Gordon Melton, who spent four years studying vampire culture and runs the Institute for the Study of American Religion in Santa Barbara, Calif.

"Instead of a group of people sitting around and rolling dice, the dice have been eliminated, costumes have been added and staging has been added," Melton said. "It's quite an event."

Four of the teen-agers await extradition from Louisiana, where all five suspects were arrested Thanksgiving night. The lone adult suspect, 19-year-old Dana Cooper, was returned Tuesday to Florida to face murder charges.

She seemed solemn, tired and pale as she was denied bond yesterday in Tavares, Fla. She appeared before a judge by video camera from jail, and no court date was set.

One of the suspects, Roderick Ferrell, 16, had lived in Eustis, Fla., where he met 15-year-old Heather Wendorf. He and three other teens from Kentucky went to Eustis where they allegedly bludgeoned Wendorf's parents.

The group fled in the Wendorfs' vehicle and were caught in Baton Rouge, La., after the parents of one of the teens called police, authorities said.

Authorities believe Ferrell also was involved in a break-in this fall at an animal shelter in which two puppies were mutilated.

His mother, Sondra Gibson, faces charges of solicitation to commit rape. She wrote a sexually explicit letter to a 14-year-old boy, urging him "to become a Vampire, a part of the family immortal" and asking him to become "my sire," police said.

Police in Kentucky say the youths drank their own blood and that of mutilated animals. Most players don't drink blood, which is associated with a fringe group called Gothics, Melton said. "Most people, when they get around to drinking blood, are too afraid and don't like the taste," he said.

Murder suspect Dana Lynn Cooper, 19, of Murray, Ky., is escorted to the Lake County Jail in Tavares, Fla., Tuesday night. She is the lone adult suspect in the vampire cult slayings of Richard and Naomi Wendorf in Eustis, Fla.

Women more inclined than men to nurture nature, poll concludes

By SCOTT SONNER
Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON—Most Americans are concerned about the environment and would pay more to conserve it, but women stand out as the biggest advocates of protecting Mother Nature, a study found.

The "environmental gender gap" was highlighted in a Roper Starch poll released yesterday that shows 33 percent of the men surveyed believe government regulation of the environment has gone too far while only 14 percent of the women answered that way.

Conversely, 51 percent of the women and 38 percent of the men said government regulation of the environment has not gone far enough, according to the poll commissioned by the National Environmental Education and Training Foundation, a nonprofit group based in Washington D.C.

Specifically in regard to air quality, 12 percent of the men said regulation has gone too far compared to 4 percent of the women. In each case, the remainder said the balance was about right or they didn't know, according to the poll, which had a margin of error of 3 percentage points.

"We tend to think of the gender gap as having to do mostly with women's rights kinds of concerns, with abortion or whatever. But here it is showing up as an environmental concern," Kevin Coyle, president of the foundation, said in an interview. "Men also are pro-environment, but there are some pretty definite differences. Women are more pro-environment and policy makers ought to understand that if they want to close any gender gap," said Coyle, former president of the river conservation group, American Rivers.

Among this year's findings:

■ 75 percent said they would pay for more expensive, pollution-reducing gasoline.

■ 54 percent agreed federal government spending should be shifted to environmental programs from other areas.

■ 63 percent said when compromise is impossible, the environment should be favored over development. The National Environmental Education and Training Foundation was established under an act of Congress in 1990 to promote learning about the environment through cooperative efforts with government agencies, private corporations and other non-profit groups.

The polling conducted in May 1996 was financed by a number of ski resorts, private foundations and companies, including Phillips Petroleum. Times Mirror Magazines conducted the survey for each of the four previous years.

Among men and women combined, one of the most significant changes over the five years came in response to the question about whether government regulation has gone too far or not far enough.

In 1992, 63 percent answered "not gone far enough," 17 percent "about the right balance" and 16 percent "gone too far." This year it was 45 percent "not gone far enough," 28 percent "about the right balance" and 19 percent "gone too far."

Barnett's GREATEST

Seal found stranded 20 miles from sea

upi.com

Police and animal rescue workers used broom and a metal fence to herd the animal into a trailer.

By Amy R. Connolly | Dec. 22, 2014 at 3:52 PM

A gray seal was found lost in a field in rural England on Monday. Rescue workers were able to lure the animal into a trailer for medical treatment. Photo courtesy Cheshire Police.

MERSEYSIDE, England, Dec. 22 (UPI) -- A young male seal was found stranded in an open field in rural northwest England, some 20 miles from the coast. Rescue workers used a piece of mackerel to capture the animal for medical care.

Authorities said the distressed marine mammal likely got lost when traveling up the River Mersey and diverted into a brook. A person walking a dog spotted it and called police.

The flopping seal quickly became a spectacle for local onlookers as police tried to herd the animal, first using brooms and pieces of wood and then a piece of fish.

Gary Watkinson, who owns the land where the seal decided to rest, told the Liverpool Echo that he spotted it laying in the mud.

"It's definitely come up from the brook near here. I tracked its movements and you can see the marks in the soil," he said.

The British Divers Marine Life Rescue Service said the rescue was a challenge because the animal is so big. The nearest gray seal colony is about 50 miles away, so the seal may have traveled even farther than first thought.

"We think he's come from the Mersey area, which is tidal, and he's come up the bank here and he's got lost. It's very unusual," rescue worker Rachael Fraser told The Guardian.

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Secret Rooms in Public Museums: The Hidden Homes of Ancient Erotica, Sacred Objects, and Flesh-Eating Beetles

atlasobscura.com

Museum curators and caretakers work hard to make their buildings and collections inviting and accessible, but a lot goes on behind the scenes to keep these cultural edifices running, most of which the general public is never granted access to. From collections deemed too scandalous for society's delicate sensibilities to strange practices that enable curators and designers to do their work, many museums have a secret room (or two or ten) well out of the public eye. Here are a few of those, full of books, boobs, and beetles.

Secretum in the British Museum

article-image

The Bodhisattva Tara, one of the earliest items in the Secretum (photograph by Gryffindor/Wikimedia)

Founded in 1865 in the wake of the Obscene Publications Act (1857), the British Museum's Secretum — originally called the "Cabinet of Obscene Objects" — was basically a repository for antique porn. Containing some 200 "abominable monuments to human licentiousness," the secret room required a special permit for entrance, which was only granted to people "of mature years and sound morals." The collection included antiquities like wax votive phalluses from churches in Isernia, 18th-century animal-membrane condoms tied with silk ribbons, and a Victorian reproduction of a medieval chastity belt. In the last fifty years, most of the objects that originally filled the Secretum have been dispersed to other museums and collections where they fit thematically or chronologically, but about half of the early objects remain locked away in the Department of Medieval and Later Antiquities.

Gabinetto Segreto in the Naples National Archaeological Museum

"Pan copulating with goat," one of the most famous objects in the Naples Museum collection (photograph by Kim Traynor/Wikimedia)

Another case of keeping explicit materials out of sight of the respectable, upstanding citizenry, the Gabinetto Segreto housed explicit artifacts from Pompeii starting in 1821. These included erotic frescoes, phallic lamps, stone phalluses, and bronze statues of nudes. Only men of education and means were admitted to the Secret Cabinet, and only for a time — in 1849 it was bricked up. The Gabinetto was re-opened and re-closed several more times, and in 2005 it was moved to a separate room in the Naples National Archaeological Museum, where it remains.

Restricted Aboriginal Objects at the National Museum of Australia

Aboriginal pearl shell ornaments exhibited in the Australian Museum (photograph by Schomynv/Wikimedia)

Unlike collections that are hidden because of antiquated notions of cultural propriety, the National Museum of Australia restricts its Aboriginal art out of respect. David Kaus, Senior Curator of the museum's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Programs, wrote a long report detailing the museum's policies and practices regarding sacred Aboriginal ceremonial and art objects, including bark paintings, carved stones, photographs, and recordings of secret songs. In it he says, "It is the responsibility of museums to respect the cultures they want to depict. The public use of Aboriginal secret/sacred objects is not consistent with this responsibility." Access to the restricted objects requires permission from traditional Aboriginal custodians, and the museum also has a diligent repatriation program that strives to return these objects to their rightful custodians.

article-image

article-image

Chicago Field Museum's Flesh-Eating Beetle Room

Dermestid beetles eating the tissue from skulls (photograph by JimJones1971/Wikimedia)

The Chicago Field Museum has a lot of secrets. There's the Bird Egg Collection, with over 500,000 specimens; the Rare Book Room, containing some 7,500 volumes and 3,000 works of art; and the Collections Resource Center, a $65 million, 186,000-square-foot underground facility that houses more than 13 million museum specimens and objects when they're not on display. But the strangest secret of all is the flesh-eating beetle room.

article-image

Dermestid beetles are well known to taxidermists and have been used in natural history museums since 19th-century France. The scavengers are even sometimes known as "museum beetles." It takes a colony from a few days to a few weeks to remove all skin, brains, and guts from a deceased animal, leaving its clean bones ready for museum use. The Field Museum's beetle room is filled with drying racks for carcasses (dermestid beetles won't eat moist flesh), nine tanks where the work gets done, a freezer where the finished skeletons are held until they're needed, and literally millions of beetles. (To see them in action, head over to this *Chicago Tribune* piece.)

Frick Secret Rooms

article-image

The Frick Collection (photograph by calamity_sal/Flickr)

The Frick Collection is in the former home of steel magnate Henry Frick, on Manhattan's Upper East Side. It contains a large number of paintings, sculpture, and furniture by some of the best-known European artists from the 13th through the 19th centuries. The mansion, built in 1913, was once the Frick family's residence, and there are many rooms that are closed off to the public. Some of these include a two-lane bowling alley built in 1914, a billiards room, a woodshop, and a tiny diner.

Secret Insect Room in the World Museum in Liverpool

article-image

Beetle collection (photograph via Fir0002/Wikimedia)

At Liverpool's World Museum, a secret room holds about a million pinned insects, sorted and stored in dozens of cupboards. It's one of the largest insect collections in the UK, and was started in 1855 by the 13th Earl of Darby. The collection features thousands of specimens from around the world, including the moth with the largest wingspan and the world's largest beetle, the Goliath Beetle from Africa. It also includes some very rare specimens, including a collection of 5,000 beetles brought to Liverpool by a Swiss entomologist in 1849.

Vatican Archivum Secretum

article-image

Mappa mundi in the Vatican Library (photograph via LeastCommonAncestor/Wikimedia)

The Vatican's secret archives are not much of a secret, though access is highly restricted. They are the property of the Pope and encompass more than 50 miles of shelves, containing books, documents, correspondence, and ephemera dating back to the 8th century, as well as Papal account books and state papers. In order to gain access to the archives, one must request a specific item — not an easy task, since only a fraction of the archives has been catalogued. Another secret room, the 200-foot-high Tower of the Winds, is only accessible via the secret archives.

Restricted Areas of the Intrepid

article-image

USS Intrepid (photograph by Ad Meskens/Wikimedia)

Before being decommissioned in 1974, the USS *Intrepid* was used in World War II, the Vietnam War, and the Cold War, as well as serving as a NASA recovery vessel. Now it lives in the Hudson River as the main attraction of the Intrepid Sea, Air & Space Museum, along with the submarine USS *Growler*, a Concorde SST, the space shuttle *Enterprise*, and more. Many areas of these vessels have been fully restored and maintained for public view, but there are other parts, behind closed doors, that have been left untouched except by time for 40+ years. In 2012 some behind-the-scenes tours were given, and journalists could see the command center, the engine room, and all manner of abandoned detritus, from socks to soda cans. Head to The Blaze for a selection of photos.

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Seto-taishō

Setotaishou, Shirouneri

瀬戸大将 せとたいしょう

TRANSLATION: General Seto, the crockery general

APPEARANCE: Seto-taishō is a tiny little soldier pieced together out of chipped teacups, cracked dishes, and other miscellaneous utensils which a household no longer uses. Its face is a sake bottle and its armor is made of porcelain-ware. It runs about the kitchen on tiny spoons, wielding knives or chopsticks as swords or spears.

BEHAVIOR: Seto-taishō is highly aggressive, and loves to chase the cooking staff around the kitchen, causing chaos. It occasionally crashes into walls or cabinets, shattering to hundreds of pieces, and then slowly puts itself back together again to resume its miniature kitchen war.

ORIGIN: The word seto refers to the Seto Inland Sea, an area famous for earthenware. Just like we say “china” in English to refer to this kind of crockery, the Japanese use “setomono” as a colloquialism for this type of object.

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Severed Head of Patron Saint Hits the Auction Block Sunday - Who Forted? Magazine

By Greg Newkirk on May 26, 2011

whofortedblog.com

The Skull of St. Vitalis of Assisi

Are you a collector of rare artifacts? Have you always wanted the skull of a Catholic saint in your possession? Well, you're in luck! The severed head of St. Vitalis of Assisi, who died in 1370, is prepped to hit the auction block in Duleek, Ireland on Sunday.

Vitalis, a benedict monk and hermit, gained his sainthood some years after his death, mostly thanks to some heavily publicized repentance for an early life marked by lots of sexy, sexy sinning. Since then, he has been widely attributed as the patron saint of.. venereal diseases. They really do have a saint for everything.

The skull, enclosed in a Queen Anne case, sat in the hallway of a Ango-Irish family's home for years, relegated to an outhouse when children were present, which is exactly where auctioneer Damien Matthews came across it.

"It is strange and it is macabre but it is very interesting object," Matthews said.

The piece is valued somewhere between $1200 to $1800, which seems pretty low, until you consider that the number of people who collect saintly skulls is not bound to be very large.

Owning an artifact said to cure VD for roughly the amount of the hooker that ruined your life? That's a steal.

For more on the odd item and it's pending auction, **visit Irish Central**.

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Sharks Don't Like Fairer Sex Flesh

By Nicholas St. Fleur
Dec 31, 2014 12:07PM ET

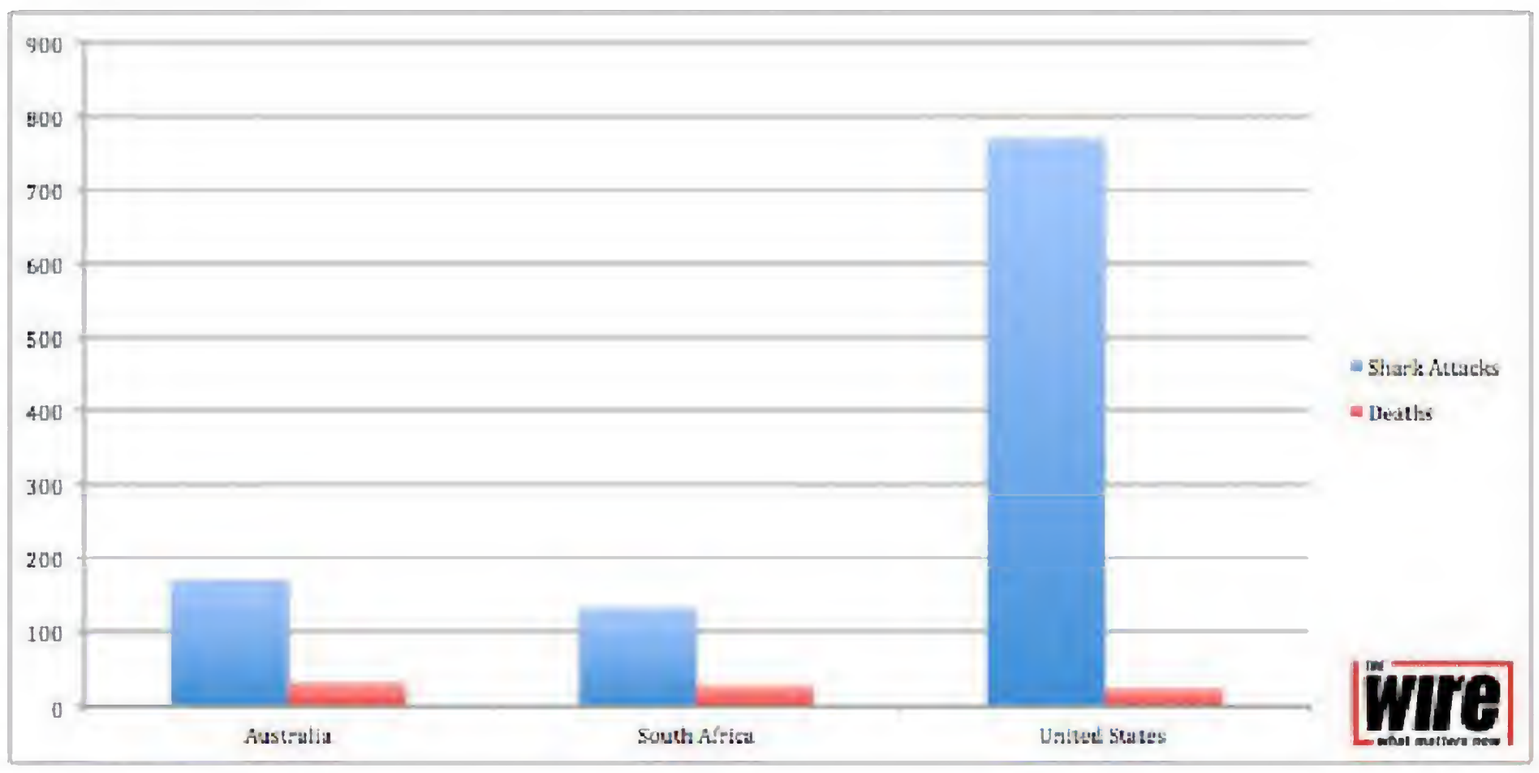
thewire.com

Gentlemen might prefer blondes ... but sharks prefer gentlemen. Bond University in Queensland, Australia determined that sharks are nine times more likely to kill men than women.

As far as unprovoked (you know, the kind where you aren't poking it) shark attacks go, 84 percent are of men and 89 percent of shark bite deaths are also xy. It seems women are not only more likely to avoid an attack, but also to live through an attack if it does occur.

The researchers focused on unprovoked attacks because people actually provoke sharks quite often. Daryl McPhee, a researcher on the study, told *The Telegraph* that provoked attacks are more common than one might imagine, "People patting sharks on the head, making them angry, putting their hand in the shark's mouth to get a fishing hook out. Jumping on sharks and trying to ride them. There are provoked shark attacks that should win Darwin Awards."

McPhee said his findings in regards to gender surprised him, "Potentially men spend more time in the water, and are more risk-prone." He told 97.1 ABC Gold Coast, "There's probably more man hours in the water so to speak than women hours globally. Also it may well be tied to males being more risk-prone than females."



Overall, shark attacks have been on the rise, tripling from 1982 to 2011. Australia has the most shark attack deaths, 32, followed by 28 in South Africa and 25 in the United States. While the U.S. has relatively few deaths from shark attacks, they experience a record 769 attacks in general. Australia had 171 attacks and 132 in South Africa. This means the highest chance of surviving a shark attack is in the States, but so is the highest risk of being bitten.

McPhee believes that the size of the shark also plays a role. In the States, you might be more likely to get bitten by a smaller shark that does less damage than in Australia, where sharks kill almost 19 percent of humans they attack. Australia is home to a number of great white, bull and tiger sharks, and white sharks attack most frequently. The bite of a great white shark is 360 pounds while a bull shark has the strongest bite, 478 pounds. Even though Australia houses many of these creatures, this summer, great white sharks made a strange turn for the Texas coast, outside of their usual migration pattern. Another great white tried to eat a robot in Cape Cod.

So, if you do decide to provoke a shark, at least make it a whale shark. They don't eat humans and its *technically* legal to ride them in Florida, though we don't recommend it. (But seriously, don't mess with sharks.)

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January 6, 2013Andrew Kincaid

Shunsen Shinigami

The Grim Reaper is probably the most widely known persona of death in Western cultures. Most typically depicted as a scythe wielding skeleton garbed in black robes, this fearsome figure harvests the souls of the dead, escorting them to the other side to await judgment and their eternal fate. While this symbol of death has deep roots in Western culture, stemming from the 14th century *Danse Macabre* imagery that became popularized when the Black Death was wreaking its havoc with European society, the Reaper has only come to Japan relatively more recently, in the form of the Shinigami.

Now, I do not purport to be an expert in Japanese folklore (or in anything, really) but as near as I can tell the Shinigami started life in the 18th or 19th century, springing forth from a variety of influences including traditional Shinto, Buddhist, and Taoist beliefs that merged with Christian influences from abroad. While the Grim Reaper is considered a fearsome creature in the West, Shinigami are more intercessors, functionaries in the grand cosmic bureaucracy whose only function is to escort souls from our world to the next. While the Grim Reaper is singular, Shinigami are depicted as being many, and working together to achieve their goals.

The word "Shinigami" itself means "death god" or "death spirit". They are believed to be a form of kami, or a spirit not unlike the Western concept of an angel. While their role in folklore has only come about in relatively recent times, the Shinigami's impact on modern Japanese pop culture has been tremendous. From *Bleach* to *Death Note*, Shinigami are often portrayed as alternatively scary, monstrous beings to human-like entities merely fulfilling a function. It seems that, for the time being at least, the Shinigami are here to stay.

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Shock discovery: 248 human fetuses found trashed in Russian forest (GRAPHIC PHOTOS)

rt.com

Published time: July 23, 2012 19:01
Edited time: July 25, 2012 14:35

Up to 250 human fetuses found trashed in Russian forest (Still from NTV coverage video)

A fishing trip in Russia's Urals ended with cries of horror as a man found canisters filled with human fetuses, some already shaped to baby bodies.

Lids on the bright blue containers apparently unlocked as the canisters hit the ground, and many fetuses spilled out. The little bodies, no longer than 15 centimeters, shrank, turning into mummies.

"*A friend of mine called at night and said he went fishing and wanted to get some wood for his fire. He found some abandoned water canisters and wanted to take them for his house. And when he came up, he saw… little baby bodies,*" a local told Russia's Channel 4.

Arriving Monday morning, police found 248 fetuses aged 12-16 weeks in and around the four canisters. Labels attached to tiny hands and legs listed family names of assumed mothers and some digit codes, which may refer to the pregnancy period, date of abortion or the hospital where the body originated from.

The 50-liter canisters filled with formalin seem to have been thrown out of a vehicle not far from a road leading to Nevyansk, a town on the slopes of the Ural Mountains.

Nevyansk authorities immediately said the canisters could not have originated in their town.

"*Our area is too small; we can't have so many stillborns, miscarriages or artificial abortions*," they said.

Later it was revealed that the horrifying content was "*biological waste*" from at least

three hospitals in Ekaterinburg, the region's major city.

"*It appears a waste disposal company has failed to carry out its duties properly,*" remark local authorities as the investigation continues. The Ministry of Health has been requested to determine which companies provide biological waste disposal services to Ekaterinburg hospitals.

In Russia, embryos and fetuses are subject to immediate disposal as they are classified high hazard waste. Prior to disposal, they are to be kept in special packages, not in canisters with formalin. It is also out of practice to attach labels with any information, at least in Ekaterinburg hospitals.

But the bodies found near the Urals not only fall out of this description – the labels show they may have been stored for over ten years.

Some medical experts believe the fetuses might have been meant for studies or other purposes, as they contain stem cells. The cells are widely used for immune illnesses treatment and in cosmetic procedures.

Prosecutors are talking tentatively of criminal charges, but most probably the guilty party will bear an administrative punishment.

The fetuses were found in and around four water containers (Still from NTV coverage video)

Police spent whole Monday studying the scene not far from the town of Nevyansk (Still from NTV coverage video)

Many fetuses were full shaped baby bodies (Still from NTV coverage video)

Labels with family names of assumed mothers and other data were attached to almost every fetus (Still from NTV coverage video)

Some fetuses might have been stored for ten years (Still from NTV coverage video)

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Shrink decapitates hubby, hides remains around Mexico City

nydailynews.com

Maria Alejandra Lafuente Caso, 40, used her husband's cellphone to send text messages so his friends and family thought he was still alive. She's accused of killing Allan Carrera Cuellar, 41, cutting his body to pieces using a chainsaw, and scattering the remains around the capital of Mexico. She claims her husband repeatedly beat her. She faces life in prison.

Wednesday, December 17, 2014, 5:29 PM

Europics Maria Alejandra Lafuente Caso was arrested after police said she murdered and decapitated her abusive husband before scattering his remains across Mexico City. She faces life in prison.

A psychologist who murdered and decapitated her abusive husband before scattering his remains across Mexico City sent text messages from his phone so friends and family would think he was still alive.

Long-suffering Maria Alejandra Lafuente Caso, 40, who claimed she had been repeatedly beaten by her hubby Allan Carrera Cuellar, 41, drugged him by slipping sleeping pills into his drink at their home in the Mexican capital.

She then took his chainsaw and chopped his body up, stuffing his remains inside black bin liners and depositing them around the city.

Police launched an investigation after children discovered his head whilst playing in a local park.

His hands and feet were later found in another part of the city.

But so that friends and family would not ask where he was, she told them he had gone on a business trip and sent them text messages from his phone.

A police spokesman said: "Before the body parts were found she convinced everyone that he was alive and well by sending text messages.

"After we found the remains and managed to identify him from DNA, she pretended to be a grieving widow.

"But a forensic examination of her home found traces of his blood and bone gristle in the carpets and bits of flesh in the bathroom.

"She then tried to have herself sectioned using her knowledge of mental illness as a psychologist so she wouldn't have to stand trial for his murder.

"But we had a doctor carry out tests and she is of perfectly sane mind."

The woman now faces life in prison.

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Shunka Warak'in: DNA Results?

Posted by: Loren Coleman on May 27th, 2009

dscn5007

Since I've been talking a great deal about the Shunka Warak'in lately, one of the most frequent questions that comes up is about the "DNA results."

For example, here is one inquiry from yesterday (no, I don't make these up; I don't have to):

"OK. The mount of the Ringdocus (and I use Ringdocus because I can't spell Shunka Warak'in) was found and DNA samples taken, but I never found out about the results. Does anyone know what resulted from the testing? I love this cryptid BTW."

The actual fact is that *no one* has done any DNA testing on the hair, fur, hide, or alleged teeth of the mount going by the names "Ringdocus," "Shunka Warak'in," and "Mystery Beast," now housed in a museum in Ennis, Montana.

Shunka Warakin

Shunka Warak'in.

Simply put, the animal is caught in a spider's web of red tape. The stalling point presently is that the animal is in one museum on exhibition, but the taxidermy mounted animal does not belong to that museum. It has only borrowed from another museum. The current exhibiting museum does not have the legal right to order a DNA test.

dscn49983

Although pressure is being placed on them to obtain DNA testing, privately and confidentially, I've been told there seems to be some active lobbying being done to avoid conducting the test.

It seems that some of the powers that be are resisting doing any DNA testing because they wish to retain the mysterious mystic of the taxidermy item.

Indeed, both museums may feel some need to *not have a test done* due to their sense it would be a less attractive exhibit.

dscn5016

Of course, from both zoological and cryptozoological points of view, now that this item, the classic Ringdocus has been discovered after over a century, I do not feel any of the enigmatic nature of the animal will be lessened if a final scientific verdict is given on what it's DNA says it is.

dscn5017

Photographs © Lance Foster 2009

About Loren Coleman

Loren Coleman is one of the world's leading cryptozoologists, some say "the" leading. Certainly, he is acknowledged as the current living American researcher and writer who has most popularized cryptozoology in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. Starting his fieldwork and investigations in 1960, after traveling and trekking extensively in pursuit of cryptozoological mysteries, Coleman began writing to share his experiences in 1969. An honorary member of Ivan T. Sanderson's Society for the Investigation of the Unexplained in the 1970s, Coleman has been bestowed with similar honorary memberships of the North Idaho College Cryptozoology Club in 1983, and in subsequent years, that of the British Columbia Scientific Cryptozoology Club, CryptoSafari International, and other international organizations. He was also a Life Member and Benefactor of the International Society of Cryptozoology (now-defunct). Loren Coleman's daily blog, as a member of the Cryptomundo Team, served as an ongoing avenue of communication for the ever-growing body of cryptozoo news from 2005 through 2013.

This entry was posted on Wednesday, May 27th, 2009 at 12:01 am and is filed under Cryptomundo Exclusive, Cryptotourism, CryptoZoo News, Cryptozoologists, Cryptozoology, Evidence, Forensic Science, Museums, Shunka Warak'in. You can follow responses via our RSS 2.0 feed. You can leave a response or trackback from your site.

10 Responses to "Shunka Warak'in: DNA Results?"

1. maeko responds: May 27th, 2009 at 10:00 am

the likelihood of viable DNA seems to be low, given the method of preservation. as i mentioned before, an x-ray may yield clues that are interpretable by an expert, but open-ended enough to leave spectulation for those that wish to see it. it may be a more palatable first step to the museum. should something unusual be found, they may jump on the DNA test.

2. Greg102 responds: May 27th, 2009 at 11:53 am

Any honest, truth seeking person in cryptozoology wants to get to the TRUTH no matter the result, whether that confirms a cryptid or a known animal. They need to do a DNA test and get to the bottom of this. Anyone not wanting a DNA test in my opinion doesn't want the true facts to surface. Why? I guess that tells a lot, but for the people who have no time for lies, hoaxes, and mystery, and only want the truth would see absolutely no rational decision not to do the test.

3. shumway10973responds:May 27th, 2009 at 12:11 pm

Unfortunately most museums and places that show off the weird and so far unexplained make their money that way. You kill the mystery and there is a good chance they lose a lot of money. They are not usually run by "true cryptozology" seekers.

4. norman-uk responds: May 27th, 2009 at 6:03 pm

One thing about hair, it provides a very good refuge for DNA protecting it from both decay and contamination within the strands. Mitochondrial DNA is favoured, but nuclear DNA is also found. Hair is not usually treated with preservatives is it and if it was any DNA might still be intact because of the natural protection given. Personally i'm rather sceptical of DNA results which deal with cryptids!

I also wonder if there is any connection with the 'mississippi hyena' and less likely the 'maine mutant'. Both on this site.

Greg102 I think you'll miss all the fun if you want your facts straight ie without any mystery. Bit like a flower in black and white!

.

5. graybear responds: May 27th, 2009 at 6:39 pm

The Shunka Wara'kin is very obviously a canid; from the looks of it I'd guess that it's most likely a wolf-coyote hybrid. Possibly it had some puppyhood disease, malnutrition or trauma which was responsible for the other physical oddities. Most of those oddities might very well have been due to poor (or possibly very deliberate and deforming) taxidermy. Then, too, it might simply have been an unfortunate, misshapen sport. A lot of people seem to forget just how different some members of any species might be from the norm for that species (think elephant man). In fact, my wife and I once had an old cat which had a facial profile which was almost identical to the slope of the Shunka Warak'in's face; this was the result of the man (?) who owned her before she came to live with us using her as a target for thrown (empty) quart beer bottles.
There isn't necessarily anything cryptic about some deformed individuals; visit a Veterans' hospital if you think different. Trauma can explain an awful lot, especially if it is years old and mostly recovered from.
There is also the idea that DNA testing can explain anything. It can't. There has to be

an accepted model for DNA results to be compared against. It isn't like a pregnancy test where blue means safe and pink means pregnant, no blue is wolf, pink is dog, purple is coyote, green is fox, brown is dire wolf.
The best that DNA tests on the Shunka Warak'in would show would be wolf, coyote, dog, some mixture of the three, or unknown canine. Until someone has a clue about what the Shunka Warak'in might be (other than a known canine of some sort) and there is a standard model of this creature to compare it to, DNA testing would be virtually useless.

6. springheeledjack responds: May 27th, 2009 at 7:24 pm

And people always wonder why cryptozoology has such a hard time coming up with anything…between actually finding something and then having to wade through politics, red tape, and just plain old fashioned pride, it's a wonder anything ever gets discovered.

Since I'm on a tirade, I may as well add on to it…I watched the show entitled "Link" the other night about the primate skeleton. What bothered me the most was the first few minutes where the main guy (I forget his name, but then I am like that with names if I don't say it at least five or six times…), went to a trade show–he talked about how real fossil finds are often snatched up by private collectors and never see the light of day…I know it happens and I understand the black market, but it ticks me because in all likelihood there could be some solid evidence for all kinds of things sitting in people's private vaults and homes and we'll never see it…

like the supposed 30's footage of Nessie that has apparently been partially shown, and then locked in a vault by the owners (who I understand have died).

Alright, I'm done venting, but I'm still ticked by all the of the "red tape" that goes on in this world…go get 'em Loren!

7. afigbee responds: October 10th, 2009 at 2:30 pm

Seems to have the certain something you see in the Tasmanian Devil.

8. richw9090 responds: September 21st, 2012 at 11:44 am

The ringdocus is clearly just a black wolf, and looks odd for two reasons: it was poorly mounted in the first place, and it has deteriorated badly since then.

It is no longer owned by a museum different from the one in which it is displayed. The Idaho Museum of Natural History deaccessioned the mount and conveyed ownership to the person who had previously borrowed it. So the museum in Enis is the only one preventing a DNA test from being done, if anyone at all is preventing it.

For anyone claiming to be interested in pursuing cryptozoology from a scientific standpoint, advocating against doing DNA testing in order to preserve some sort of "mystery" is a clear sign of a P. T. Barnum approach to the subject, not a scientific one. My good friend J. Richard Greenwell would have been appalled!

9. crypto_nerd responds: June 9th, 2013 at 3:32 am

It's a fake! No, I don't mean the creature, I think there might be some truth to it (personally I think it's chasmaporthetes[?]), and I think the mount in the black and white is genuine, I just don't believe the recently rediscovered mount is it. Ever since its discovery, I've looked at both pictures and couldn't shake the feeling that there were some differences between them. In the original, it seemed bigger, with the neck and head slightly elevated, not leaning downward. The back in the colored photos is more arched, and not level towards the head and slanted towards the rear. The face in the original seems to have a lighter touch to it, with a mouth opened wider and a jaw that is at an odd angle, not at all like a wolf. Then there's the googily eyes in the colored photos; really, cheap, plastic eyes? But, I'd say the tell-tale sign it's a fake is the "red tape" that sprung up all of a sudden; no one wants a DNA test done because they know it's authenticity is dubious. Seriously, I don't think museum curators are going to make that big of a fuss over obtaining DNA results from the hair of an animal that someone might assume was a wolf just by looking at it; you make them sound like a bunch of carnies, Coleman. If anything, I think they would want some kind of identification, so as they'd know what they're getting.

The real mount, if it isn't destroyed, is probably lost somewhere or stowed away in the back of some warehouse (ala, Indiana Jones [no pun]), and the one they have now is most likely a forgery that was based off of the original using a wolf's skin that was dyed over to make it look convincing.

Ridicule me for my theory or the fact that I put so much into this, but personally I've never appreciated being taken for a ride by anyone who would treat people like me as children for believing in such things, especially when some of us really have seen things that we can't explain (for me it was a black panther) and are genuinely looking for answers, so it would be nice to know where to go. It's like a recent news program I saw where the editor Skeptic Magazine revealed to us Roger Patterson's "partner", a New Jersey con man/magician that claimed to have made the gorilla suit for the famous film. Or, like that episode of Monster Quest that investigated Mac Farlane's bear, who's remains are still hidden from the viewing public in the Smithsonian, so they allow one person to take a look at it, without the camera crew, surprisingly, and then he tells us that it was just an ordinary, female grizzly and that there was nothing extraordinary about it. If that's the case, then what makes this animal so special that not even a cameraman is allowed anywhere near it; what is so special about a female grizzly bear or are they trying to figure out why it's fur is yellow, which by the way brings back the previous statement that there was nothing extraordinary about it in the first place, so it's coat wouldn't be out of the ordinary for grizzlies, then (and, I thought they said it was a polar bear hybrid or something; so which is it?), so why treat it like a VIP?

What bothers me, however is that no one, not even you Coleman, questions any of this; this mount is so obviously a rip-off!

10. dlarrym1 responds: October 23rd, 2014 at 1:52 pm

I am curious about this animal like everyone else is. To me , it looks like a hairy Thylacine, (Tasmanian Tiger). Just look at the wikipedia pics of the last pics of a living Thylacine and imagine it with longer hair or look at the Ringdocus with super short hair. A Thylacine has only 4 foot pads on it's rear feet but 5 like a regular dog on it's front paws.
PLUS... the Thylacine is a marsupial and thus has a tiny pouch on its underside... (if it is a female). If it is a male, then the biggest tale tale sign of it's likeliness in being a Thylacine is the foot pads that are different then a wolf or coyote.
My other idea is that it might have been the last Dire Wolf that somehow was in a small population that survived from the paleolithic era and like I said, it might have been the last one of that group that might have lived in the deep wilderness and undiscovered. Sounds nuts... remember the re-discovery of the Coelacanth.
I am curious why a DNA test hasn't been done???. it is a 100 year old specimen. Yes it has been subjected to a taxidermic process and mounted but the marrow in its bones and the teeth should readily provide viable DNA. DNA from much older animals have been retrieved successfully.
These are just my ideas and thoughts on this animal of unknown origin. Would a signed petition or some other legal task be taken to get a DNA test done. How can the museum that has this animals remains NOT want the truth to be known. It sure peaks my curiosity.
I hope before another hundred years passes, that it will finally get a proper DNA testing.
Thanks for letting me share.

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Nowadays, it seems like the Appalachian trail is as crowded as a busy city street, with noisy novice hikers clad head to toe in the latest, most expensive, gear, armed with GPS devices and constantly talking on their cell phones. With the hills becoming so crowded, a man who wants to get out alone in the wilderness has farther and farther to go.

Such a man might decide to head out on his own, and just follow the course of a nearby wandering river. If he started out from Asheville, his course would naturally be along the French Broad whose wide banks skirt the city. Taking a light pack and a few days worth of food, he could just set out along the course of the river, pausing frequently to watch the water rolling over its rocks, and just enjoying the peacefulness and quiet still to be found on its banks.

But on the first night, after he pitches his tent and settles down in his sleeping bag, he may find himself tossing and turning and troubled by strange dreams. A beautiful, dark haired, dark eyed woman who seems like she might be Cherokee walks in and out of his restless mind all night. And though the whole night he dreams of nothing but her, he can never see her clearly and she always seems like she's a great distance away. He is woken before dawn by the sound of what he thinks is singing, but the sound soon vanishes as he waits in his tent for the light to come.

When dawn comes, he cooks his breakfast and packs his tent and makes his way further down the river, moving more slowly than yesterday and still feeling groggy and dazed. He doesn't get as far down the river as he thinks he will, and when the evening comes he's glad to pitch his tent and lay down wrapped in his bag, expecting sleep to come easy after his exhausting day.

But again his dreams are troubled by the vision of the dark-haired woman. Again, he awakes to the sound of singing, but this time the voice comes at midnight, and the young man steps out of his tent to stand by the banks of the river in the darkness, the sound persists. A subtle, beautiful singing full of rich melancholy and precious longing. Enchanted, he lays down by the side of the river, and with the sound in his mind his exhausted body gives in and he drifts off to sleep. When he awakes on the hard rocks, it's well past dawn and all he can remember from his dreams is that the woman was there again and this time she seemed much closer.

On the third day, he walks even more slowly than the last, and when he gets to a certain bend in the river where the water collects in a deep pool, he finds himself unwilling to move from the spot. He pitches his tent well before dusk and sits by the river to wait.

As twilight descends into night, the young man doesn't go inside of his tent, but still sits by the side of the river, staring into the deep waters of the pool. As night comes into its own, the young man hears the sweet singing once again, more indescribably beautiful than any voice he has ever heard. And as the voice grows louder it seems to be coming from the pool of dark water by his feet. And as he looks into the pool, he seems to see the form of a beautiful dark-haired woman rising out of the water towards him. She is naked and more perfect than he could have imagined, the smooth curves of her body seeming to repeat the slow, smooth curves of the river. And he knows that she is singing to him.

Unable to resist, the young man reaches into the water to touch the woman, but as her hand wraps around his, it's not warm flesh that he feels, but cold, rough and slimy scales and claws that dig painfully into his arm before he can pull away.

Before he even has a chance to scream, the cold grip pulls him into the dark water and he disappears below the surface and to his doom, another young life lost to the Siren of the French Broad.

A Little History of this Story

The story of the Siren of the French Broad first appears in print in 1845 as *Tzelica, A Tradition of the French Broad*, a 64-line poem by William Gilmore Simms published in his *Southern and Western* magazine, but is more widely known from the 1896 retelling in Charles Montgomery Skinner's Myths and Legends of Our Own Land.

The French Broad river itself is shrouded in mystery, one of the most puzzling as to why exactly it is French. The name first appears in official records in 1777, and may come from the fact that with treaty of Paris that ended the French and Indian war in 1763 all waters that flowed into the Mississippi basin were deemed French territory. The French Broad flows west into the Tennessee river which eventually joins the Mississippi, and so the name might have been given around that time, particularly to differentiate the river from the nearby Broad river.

Skinner reports that the Cherokee name for the river Tselica, though Indian naming conventions differed from European ones in that the Indians didn't give single names to entire rivers but instead gave individual names to geographically important features along the river. This approach certainly makes more sense if you're traveling along a river instead of looking at it on a map, but it was the source of miscommunication between the Europeans conducting their surveys and the Indians being asked the questions. The Europeans thought they were asking the name of the whole river, while the Indians were usually giving the name of the most convenient feature. In this way, the names of many smaller features transferred themselves onto entire rivers. The not-too distant Hiwassee river derives its name from a Cherokee word meaning "Stone Wall" for a landmark perhaps built by the The Moon-Eyed People.

The U.S. Board on Geographic names has recorded several different names for the French Broad, including Poelico, Satica, and Tahkeeoskee, all of of which may be features on the river whose identify is forever lost. Still, the name as we have it is a fine one, and reminds us of what seems like an improbable time when part of North Carolina was French territory.

The French Broad's is not the only river spirit in the Appalachians. Tales of a similar, but less aggressive, river spirt are told across the border about the Salt River in Kentucky.

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Artist Illustration

The **Sliver Cat** (*Felis glabraspiculata*) is a bizarre creature from the tales of the lumberjacks of North America, known as a fearsome critter. It is a big tree-dwelling mammalian creature that resembles a cat but has a long tail with a spiky hard ball in the end. Its ears are tasseled and its eyes red, with horizontal slits.

This creature is very dangerous. It preys on unsuspecting animals and occasionally humans. The Sliver Cat ambushes them from the trees, knocking them unconscious with its tail. It would then drag the body up into its nest to devour it at its leisure.

Retrieved from "http://cryptidz.wikia.com/wiki/Sliver_Cat?oldid=22870"

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SLU professor reveals history behind famous carols

theadvocate.com

Dec 23, 2014 16:43

Southeastern Louisiana University communications professor Joseph Burns researched the history of Christmas carols thoroughly for a presentation he made recently at the university's annual Fanfare festival, a fall celebration of the arts, humanities and social sciences.

Burns said many people can get the wrong idea by going solely according to the title or lyrics. For example, in "God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen," he singles out the comma placement.

"It has nothing to do with happy, merry men. It was first published in the mid-1700s and is referenced in Dickens' 'A Christmas Carol,' " said Burns, who produces the weekly radio show "Rock School" on the university's station, KSLU-FM. "The word 'merry' means strong or mighty, as in 'merry old England,' and the word 'rest' means to keep or make. So the title translates to 'God keep you mighty, gentlemen,' and refers to the lamplighters and additional men hired to patrol during the holidays."

"You may sing 'We Three Kings,' but you should recognize that in Matthew 2:1-12 there are no references to the number three, kings, the Orient or their names," Burns said. "The passage suggests the men were Magi, those who studied the stars. Also, they came from the East, which most likely was Persia or present-day Iraq. And the names Caspar, Melchior and Balthazar came from an early 6th-century Greek manuscript."

" 'Good King Wenceslas' is a great song as well," Burns said, "except St. Wenceslaus I, on whom the song is based, was the duke of Bohemia, not a king. Luckily, Holy Roman Emperor Otto I posthumously conferred on Wenceslas the title of 'king.' "

The song "I'll Be Home for Christmas" almost never got recorded, he said. Written in 1943 by Kimball Gannon about a soldier writing to his family, no music publishers wanted to touch it, thinking it would have brought people down during the holiday.

"Luckily, Gannon was a golfing buddy with Bing Crosby, who recorded it on the B-side of the highest selling single of all time, 'White Christmas.' A song no one wanted sold 50 million copies," he said.

Before 1857, Santa did not land on your roof, but on your lawn, as in the phrase "When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter." Burns said the switch came when the song "Up on the House Top" was written by Benjamin Hanbly and recorded by a multitude of singers, most notably Gene Autry in 1953. Santa's been landing there since.

The carol "Do You Hear What I Hear?" is a relatively new classic released in 1962 by Noel Regney and Gloria Shayne Baker. Burns said they were asking if you heard a bomb, and the song was written as a cry for peace during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

Burns asks why does Alvin want a Hula-Hoop in the Chipmunks' Christmas song? It's because the song was released in 1958, and the No. 1-selling toy that year was ... you guessed it, a Hula-Hoop.

"You can use this to sound informed this year about Christmas carols," Burns said. "So 'Jingle bells, jingle bells, jingle all the way,' which, by the way, is not a Christmas song. It was written in 1857 by James Pierpoint for his Boston Sunday School Thanksgiving celebration."

1. SLU professor reveals history behind famous carols
2. Meet Alexandria's Lamar White Jr.: The blogger who penned story about U.S. Rep. Scalise speaking to David Duke-led group in 2002
3. Sources: LSU defensive coordinator John Chavis 'upset' about clause in contract; Texas A&M continues its pursuit

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Snakes Alive! A Fossilized Dragon Man? - Who Forted? Magazine

By Chris Savia on November 17, 2014 whofortedblog.com

Reptilians suffuse humanity's legends and lore from time immemorial.

Hopi Indians told tales of their underground "snake brothers", or *sheti*, living underneath the American southwest and California. A little less obscure is Q'uq'umatz, the Mayan serpent of wisdom, preceding the Aztec culture's famous Quetzalcoatl. The feathered serpent is interesting an interesting concept since mainstream science discovered dinosaurs had feathers, or feather-like structures, covering their bodies. Maybe based Quetzalcoatl was an extant, intelligent dinosaur who demanded blood sacrifice?

Meh, it's a good a guess as ancient mesoamericans mentally combining an eagle with a snake into some weird chimera.

Athens's first ruler, Cecrops, was described as a "snake-centaur" being human on top and 100% snake below the belt.

More notorious are the nagas of east Indian legend who shift between serpent and human form. These water spirits also loom large in Buddhism, as Mucalinda sheltered a post-enlightenment Buddha from the elements with his seven snake heads.

Also snakes are Indiana Jones's kryptonite, protecting the holy of holies from unscrupulous tomb raiders.

Bringing us to a curiosity from a dead web page.1 From secondary sources,2 this is an art exhibit at a museum in Japan, the fossilized remains of a human-dragon hybrid, or a nephilim.

dragon

dragon_man_side

So far I've only found this blurb, and Google's translation does it no favors. "BC.370X year ,,, humans evolved ,,, became Dragon Man Osameta the fossil to the film ,, Kara ,, introduce ,, NOT USED ,, Chinamini ,, timer ,, Miraihe ,, warp Shiteru situ, , two ..blog Keitel ,, ≡≡≡≡"3 Apparently Harvey Keitel was going to be in a film called "Dragon Man" and this was a prop?

1. http://homepage.mac.com/angiu/iblog/B1292177912/C1636359483/E200611082315 47/index.html

2. http://www.davidicke.com/forum/showthread.php?t=125804

3. http://blue.ap.teacup.com/3196z/74.html

Chris Savia

News Editor at The Anomalist

1. Tfry

11/18/2014 at 8:25 PM

It's plaster of paris. I found this on a forum from 2010:

Originally Posted by theoferrum View Post I just sent him this letter : Lets see if he replies.

Story behind one of your Journal Photos Saturday, July 17, 2010 6:36 PM
From: "David Hill"
To: "ec@ecworks.com" Hello Mr. Costadimas

I was wondering if you could tell me the specifics behind the photo you took for your Sept 23, 2006 entry at the url below. What is the name of the museum where the picture was taken, whether or not this is a real fossil, and if so the specifics of its discovery, or if it is a work of art by someone and if so their contact details.

Thank you for you time.

Sincerely,

David T. Hill

http://homepage.mac.com/angiu/iblog/...547/index.html
Alright, Ladies and Gentlemen, here is the Photographers reply and I have put in bold the pertinent comments :

Re: Story behind one of your Journal Photos
Sunday, July 18, 2010 5:02 AM
From: "evangelo costadimas"
To: "David Hill" Hello David,

The picture was not taken inside a museum but in a private gallery at the back of a clothing/lifestyle shop owned and operated by a Japanese eccentric in Tokyo (situated in the Shibuya shopping area).

The exhibition had several such display cases and other artifacts, including diagrams and photographs from the supposed excavation site. The photographs were sepia toned and looked like they could have been from late 1800's or early 1900's.

The premise was to present the possibility of a race of horned 'dragon men', complete with reptilian tails, that might have existed with considerable proof being offered in the form of these found 'fossils'.

The entire thing is an elaborate hoax but it fools many of the visitors into believing the story.

I found it extremely amusing and incredibly well made, the fossils look very real and very scary, but of course the owner will not admit they are fake, else it wouldn't be so much fun.

I thought I would have some fun with it too and enigmatically presented it in my blog.

I hope I didn't scare you.

EC

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Japan's 'solo' weddings

22December2014

bbc.com

Last updated at 08:39 ET

Models wearing bridal kimonos at a fashion show

Models wearing bridal kimonos at a fashion show in Japan

A travel agency in one of Japan's most beautiful cities, Kyoto, has started organising bridal ceremonies for single women.

Kyodo news agency reports that Cerca Travel's two-day "solo wedding" package includes choosing your own special gown, bouquet and hairstyle, a limousine service, a stay at a hotel and a commemorative photo album. "This package boosted my sense of self-esteem... the effect was equal to a more extraordinary experience, such as visiting a World Heritage castle," says Tomoe Sawano, one of the first to try out a "solo wedding". About 30 women from across Japan have become "solo brides" since the service was launched in May. Almost half of them were married women who either did not have a wedding ceremony or were not satisfied with that experience, according to Cerca Travel.

The company's president, Yukiko Inoue, tells Kyodo she created the package "to encourage women to have positive feelings about themselves", but admits that "some people have said it would be 'lonely, miserable and sad' to use it". "Nationwide, more Japanese are living alone for a number of reasons - among them aging, urbanization, later marriage age and rising divorce rates," The Japan Times notes in a recent article. It quotes the National Institute of Population and Social Security Research as saying that the country's population is expected to decline between 26% and 38% by 2060.

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Someone Accidentally Donates Human Remains To Goodwill

huffingtonpost.com

Posted: 12/17/2014 1:21 pm EST Updated: 12/17/2014 5:59 pm EST

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (AP) — Two boxes of cremated human remains mistakenly included among household items donated to an Indiana Goodwill have been reunited with the deceased's next of kin, police said.

Goodwill employees sorting through donated items Friday found two small, white boxes filled with cremains, Lafayette police Sgt. Grant Snyder told the Journal & Courier (http://on.jconline.com/12WHcXY).

A merchandise sorter found the boxes inside velvet pouches inside a larger box, store manager Paula Strong said.

"When she pulled them out of the red velvet bags, that is when she realized that they were from a crematory and what they were," Strong said.

Each box was marked with a date and name, which police used to reunite the remains with survivors.

It's not uncommon for donors to drop off mystery items after cleaning out their relatives' homes, Strong said. But Friday's discovery ranks as the "strangest" thing she's seen at her store.

"I'm just happy that they did find the family," she said.

Information from: Journal and Courier, http://www.jconline.com

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Somerset police on hunt for stolen sheep lick

December 18th 2014 wellsjournal.co.uk

Police want your help in solving a very Somerset kind of a crime.

Someone has only gone and snuck into a barn at Green Ore, near Wells, and stolen some sheep lick.

In fact, according to police, they took no fewer than 22 tubs of the stuff during the raid on Monday between 11am and 4pm.

At the same time, they made off with a quad bike.

So if you see anyone powering along on a quad with 22 tubs of sheep lick on the back, call Avon and Somerset Police on 101.

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Something Alive Is Moving About Half Of The Water In The Oceans

upworthy.com

Curator: Robby Berman
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FACTS!

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It's becoming clear that whales are doing a whole lot more than just swimming around, blowing the minds of life-jacketed landlubbers in boats.

When humans kill whales, we're doing more than making a cruel choice — we're messing with an entire ecosystem. Some people justify their slaughter with the argument that the fewer whales there are, the more food there is for everyone else.

Well, it turns out the *opposite is true.*

Whales help keep the oceans full of life.

It's a little surprising, but when whale populations fall, so do the populations of the animals they eat. When there are a lot of whales, there are also more of the little beasties they eat. You wouldn't think so, but it's true.

It all has to do with something called a **trophic cascade**, an "ecological process that starts at the top of the food chain and tumbles all the way down to the bottom." At the top of one big food chain swim the whales.

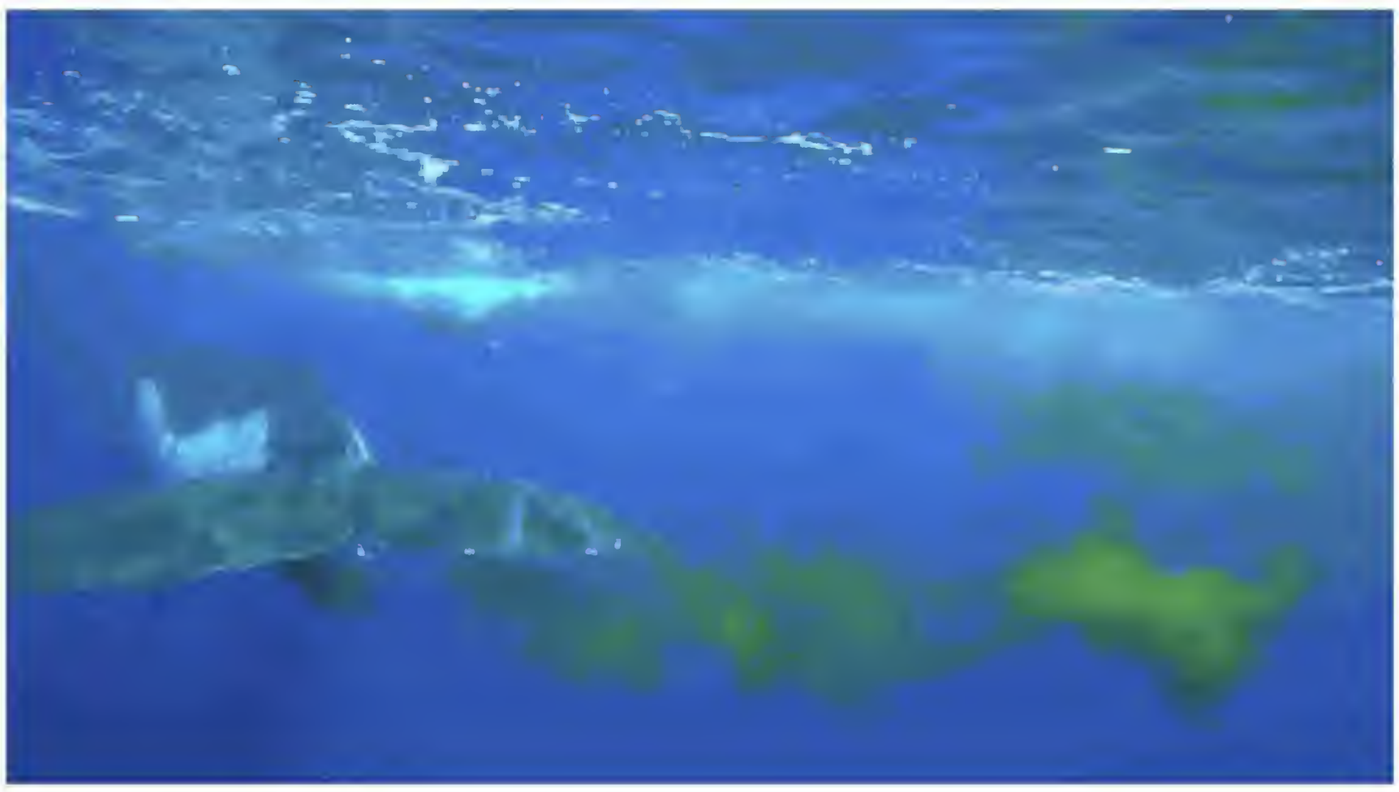
It's all their deep-diving and coming back up that makes them so important.

Whales stir up as much of the ocean as wind, waves, and tides combined!

Just by doing what they do, they drag things from the surface down to the dark bottom, and then they bring stuff on the bottom back up, dragging it into the light where things can grow.

Here's an example. They eat down in the deep, and after when they swim up to the surface, they, um, redistribute the organic matter as...

"Poo-namis."



No, not some new kind of tidal wave — just a massive amount of whale poop. It's an important fertilizer for the ocean's upper layers. Since there's light there, photosynthesis can happen and plants can grow when they get enough nutrients. So, well, thank you, whale poo.

Whales eat lots of little beasties, right?

Yes, but it's also true that whales rescue them from sinking into the killer darkness, acting like ginormous up-and-down taxicabs. They pull animals behind their massive bodies as they swim back up into the light where the little things can survive, reproduce, and grow. And there's a big plus here for humans: Plankton, which whales ferry to the surface, *absorb tons of CO2 from the atmosphere* — they help with global warming.

So, these gigantic beings can be part of our solution.

Scientists are realizing that instead of allowing the killing of whales to continue, we should be working to let their populations grow — for the good of the oceans, and for our own good. It's something pretty easy that we can do, and it's yet another reason to keep these wonderful creatures around. More people need to know about this.

Narrator: One of the most exciting scientific findings of the past half century has been the discovery of widespread trophic cascades. A trophic cascade is an ecological process which starts at the top of the food chain and tumbles all the way down to the bottom. We all know that whales eat fish and krill, and some people - certain politicians in Japan, for instance - have argued that killing whales is good for human beings, as it boost the food available for us to eat. And so you would think. But as the great whales declined, so did the numbers of fish and krill. It seems counter-intuitive: surely their numbers would rise as their major predators disappeared? But it now turns out that whales not only eat these animals; they also keep them alive. In fact they help to sustain the entire living system of the ocean.

Whales feed at depth, in waters that are often pitch dark, and then they return to the surface, to the photic zone, where there's enough light for photosynthesis to happen. There they release what biologists call fecal plumes, vast outpourings of poo, poonamis. These plumes are rich in iron and nitrogen, nutrients which are often very scarce in the surface waters. And these nutrients fertilize the plant plankton that lives in the only place where plants can survive, the photic zone.

Fertilizing the surface waters isn't the only thing the whales do. By plunging up and down through the water column, they also keep kicking the plankton back up into the photic zone, giving it more time to reproduce before it sinks into the abyss. Even today, though whale populations have been greatly reduced, the vertical mixing of water caused by movements of animals up and down through the column of the oceans is, astonishingly, roughly the same as the amount of mixing caused by all the world's wind and waves and tides.

More plant plankton means more animal plankton, on which larger creatures then feed. In other words, more whales means more fish and krill. But the story doesn't end here, because plant plankton not only feeds the animals of the sea; it also absorbs carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. When, eventually, it sinks to the ocean floor, it takes this

carbon out of circulation, down to a place where it remains for thousands of years. The more whales there are, the more plankton there is. The more plankton there is, the more carbon is drawn out of the air. When whales were at their historic populations, before great numbers of them were killed, it seems that they might have been responsible for removing tens of millions of tonnes of carbon from the atmosphere every year. Whales change the climate. The return of the great whales, if they are allowed to recover, could be seen as a benign form of geo-engineering. It could undo some of the damage we have done, both to the living systems of the sea, and to the atmosphere.

There may be small errors in this transcript.

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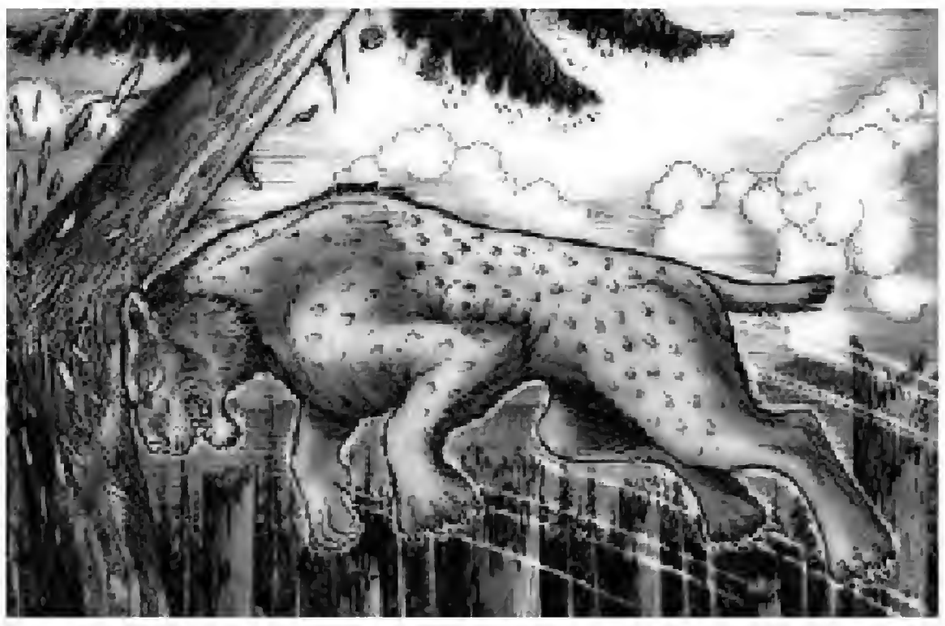

Artist rendering

The **Splinter Cat** is a fearsome critter from various places in North America. It is found from the Great Lakes to the Gulf, and eastward to the Atlantic Ocean, but it has been reported in the Rocky Mountains from only a few localities. Apparently the splinter cat inhabits that part of the country in which wild bees and raccoons abound, because they eat coons or honey during dark and stormy nights. Strangely, they have a hard head to charge and break every tree in sight knocking them down to the floor until a hollow one containing food is found. Then they leave this place broken and shattered.

Maybe this story inspired by destroyed forest after windstorm. "Splintercat Creek", found in the northern Cascade Range of Oregon is named after this legendary animal.

Retrieved from "http://cryptidz.wikia.com/wiki/Splinter_Cat?oldid=26995"

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Spontaneous combustion killed Irish pensioner, inquest rules

Henry McDonald , Ireland correspondent
Friday 23 September 2011

theguardian.com

An Irish pensioner found burnt to death at his home died from spontaneous human combustion, an inquest has concluded.

The West Galway coroner, Kieran McLoughlin, said there was no other adequate explanation for the death of 76-year-old Michael Faherty, also known as Micheal O Fatharta. He said it was the first time in his 25 years as a coroner that he had returned such a verdict.

An Irish police crime scene investigator and a senior fire officer told the inquest in Galway that they could not explain how Faherty burned to death. Both said they had not come across such a set of circumstances before.

The assistant chief fire officer, Gerry O'Malley, said fire officers were satisfied that an open fire in Faherty's fireplace had not been the cause of the blaze.

No trace of an accelerant was found at the scene, and there was no sign that anyone else had entered or left the house in Ballybane, Galway city.

The inquest heard that asmoke alarm in the home of Faherty's neighbour Tom Mannion had gone off at about 3am on 22 December last year. Mannion said he went outside and saw heavy smoke coming from Faherty's house. He banged on the front door but got no response, and then banged on the door of another neighbour. Gardai and the fire brigade arrived quickly at the scene.

Garda Gerard O'Callaghan said he went to the house after the fire had been extinguished and found Faherty lying on his back in a sitting room, with his head closest to the fireplace. The rest of the house had sustained only smoke damage.

O'Callaghan told the coroner that the only damage was to Faherty's remains, the floor underneath him and the ceiling above. .

The inquest heard that fire officers had been unable to determine the cause or the origin of the fire.

The state pathologist, Prof Grace Callagy, noted in her post-mortem findings that Faherty had Type 2 diabetes and hypertension, but concluded he had not died from heart failure.

His body had been extensively burned and, because of the extensive damage to the organs, it was not possible to determine the cause of death.

McLoughlin said: "This fire was thoroughly investigated and I'm left with the conclusion that this fits into the category of spontaneous human combustion, for which there is no adequate explanation."

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h2g2 - Squonks - Mythical Animals - Edited Entry

Jun 26, 2004

h2g2.com

The Squonk (*Lacrimacorpus dissolvens*) is a legendary creature from the Hemlock forests of north-central and north-western Pennsylvania. The earliest stories about the squonk are lost to history, but the legend probably dates back at least to the late 19th Century, when Pennsylvania's importance in the lumber industry was at its peak, relying heavily on hemlock trees1.

Legends

Squonks are very shy, very ugly animals. Their skin is ill-fitting, and covered with warts and moles. Because they know they are so ugly, they weep almost constantly, and try to avoid being seen.

The one well-known story about squonks has to do with how they are hunted. Apparently, squonk skin is valued by some, but they are very difficult to catch, because of their extremely retiring nature. They can be most easily tracked on nights with a full moon, when their tears form glistening trails on the ground.

Sometime around the year 1900, a man named JP Wentling2 was able to successfully catch a squonk. Mr Wentling followed a trail of tears, and when he heard a nearby squonk weeping under a hemlock tree, he lured it by imitating the creature, presumably by weeping. He caught the squonk in a bag, and carried it home, while it sobbed pitifully in his sack. As he carried his prize home, he suddenly noticed that the bag was lighter, and on opening it, found that there was nothing inside but tears and bubbles.

Squonks will apparently dissolve completely into tears anytime they are cornered or threatened; this is the source of their scientific name, *Lacrimacorpus dissolvens*, from the Latin words for 'tear', 'body', and 'dissolve'.

Squonks in Literature and Music

William T Cox

William T Cox published a book in 1910, called *Fearsome Creatures of the Lumber woods, With a Few Desert and Mountain Beasts*. In this book, he described the squonk, telling the story related above. The book was an encyclopaedic collection of legendary animals from United States folklore. Sadly, *Fearsome Creatures* is out of print, and rather difficult to find.

Jorge Luis Borges

Jorge Luis Borges, the Nobel Prize-winning Argentinean writer, used Mr Cox's book as a source when compiling his *Book of Imaginary Beings* in 19693. This book has descriptions of 120 fantastic and legendary creatures from many different cultures, mostly European and New World.

Borges opened the preface of his 1969 edition with a sentence that may resonate with some h2g2 Researchers: 'As we all know, there is a kind of lazy pleasure in useless and out-of-the-way erudition.' His book has been illustrated and hypertextualized by students in Greece, and may be found here.

Steely Dan

In 1974, Donald Fagen and Walter Becker of Steely Dan released their third LP, *Pretzel Logic*. This album featured the song 'Any Major Dude Will Tell You', a bittersweet acoustic ballad, offering consolation to someone whose world seems to be falling apart. Fagen puzzled his studio musicians with the line:

Have you ever seen a squonk's tears? Well, look at mine.
People on the street have all seen better times.

Exactly why Messrs Fagen and Becker chose this image to use in this song is as mysterious as most Steely Dan lyrics, and as they typically refuse to answer questions about their songs, fans continue to speculate. It seems likely that 'The Dan' learned about squonks from Borges' book.

Genesis

In 1976, the band Genesis released their first LP after Peter Gabriel left the group - the first to feature Phil Collins as frontman. This album, *A Trick of the Tail* contains the song 'Squonk'. This song is basically a retelling of the story of Mr Wentling, squonk hunter. That Collins is using the story as some kind of allegory seems clear, especially from the final verse:

All in all you are a very dying race
Placing trust upon a cruel world.
You never had the things you thought you should have had
And you'll not get them now,
And all the while in perfect time
Your tears are falling on the ground.

What Mr Collins is actually getting at is left to the reader to speculate4. It is not known whether Genesis were inspired to find the story of the squonk by hearing 'Any Major Dude', or whether they discovered it independently, but the story in the song is clearly taken from Mr Cox's work, probably via Borges' book.

Squonks Today

At the time of writing of this entry (October, 2002), people continue to read Borges, and to listen to music from the 1970s. Squonks are being discovered by more and more people. The name turns up, here and there, as a username or domain name on the Internet somewhere, in the name of Squonk Opera, a performing arts troupe in the Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania area, and in other unexpected and unrelated contexts. Perhaps we are standing at the threshold of a veritable squonk renaissance!

One shadow looms over this prospect, however. The squonk's habitat, in the hemlock forests of Pennsylvania, is severely reduced. Most of the hemlock trees were logged by 1915, and the species has become just an occasional sight in the area's hardwood forests. It is not known whether squonks rely on hemlock trees, but as their range decreases, it can only mean hard times for any surviving squonk populations. The only hope for the squonk's survival may now lie in the imaginations of dreamers, poets, and those who treasure the legends of the past.

1While 'hemlock' is the name of an herbaceous old-world plant, infamous for being the poison that killed Socrates, the Eastern Hemlock is a real tree - *Tsuga canadensis* - an evergreen with tannin-rich bark. The Eastern Hemlock is the State Tree of Pennsylvania.2Some sources have his name as JP Wentley.3Originally published in 1957 as *Manual de Zoología Fantástica* (Handbook of Fantastic Zoology), and then expanded as *El Libro de los Seres Imaginarios*.4Some have supposed that he was talking about his former bandmate, Mr Gabriel.

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STOP THE PRESSES: Record Set For World's Largest Paper Wad

huffingtonpost.com

Posted: 12/30/2014 10:23 am EST Updated: 12/30/2014 10:59 am EST

PAPER WAD

In this Aug. 6, 2014 photo provided by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, from left, Wayne Gjerde, Nate Straka and Eric Nelson measure a ball of paper, at the Eco Experience building on the Minnesota State Fairgrounds, in St. Paul, Minn. The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency said that Guinness World Records has confirmed it holds the record for largest ball of paper, measuring 9 feet 7 inches tall and 32.2 feet in circumference. (AP Photo/Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, Scott Andre) | AP

A state agency in Minnesota is claiming the world record for largest ball of paper.

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency says the ball measures 9 feet 7 inches tall and 32.2 feet in circumference. The 426-pound ball was displayed at the Minnesota State Fair to show how much recyclable paper state residents throw away every 30 seconds.

But anyone who missed seeing the ball at the fair is out of luck: The agency recycled it, turning it into cardboard for cereal boxes.

Spokeswoman Taylor Holland said Monday that the agency got confirmation last week from Guinness World Records. There wasn't a previous record.

The ball was built around a cardboard frame and held together with paper netting. In keeping with Guinness guidelines, no adhesives or tape was used.

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When the eagle grows old, its wings turn heavy and its eyes turn dim, a medieval bestiary explains. The eagle sensibly seeks out a fresh spring but then does something counterintuitive: flies upward away from the spring and toward the sun where its wings catch fire. Then the eagle dunks itself three times in the spring, completely revived. "In the same way, you, O man, with your old clothes and dim eyes, should seek the spiritual spring of the Lord." As the Middle Ages gave way to the Renaissance and Enlightenment, naturalists replaced morality tales with observations of living habits, but legends lingered for centuries.

Phoenix

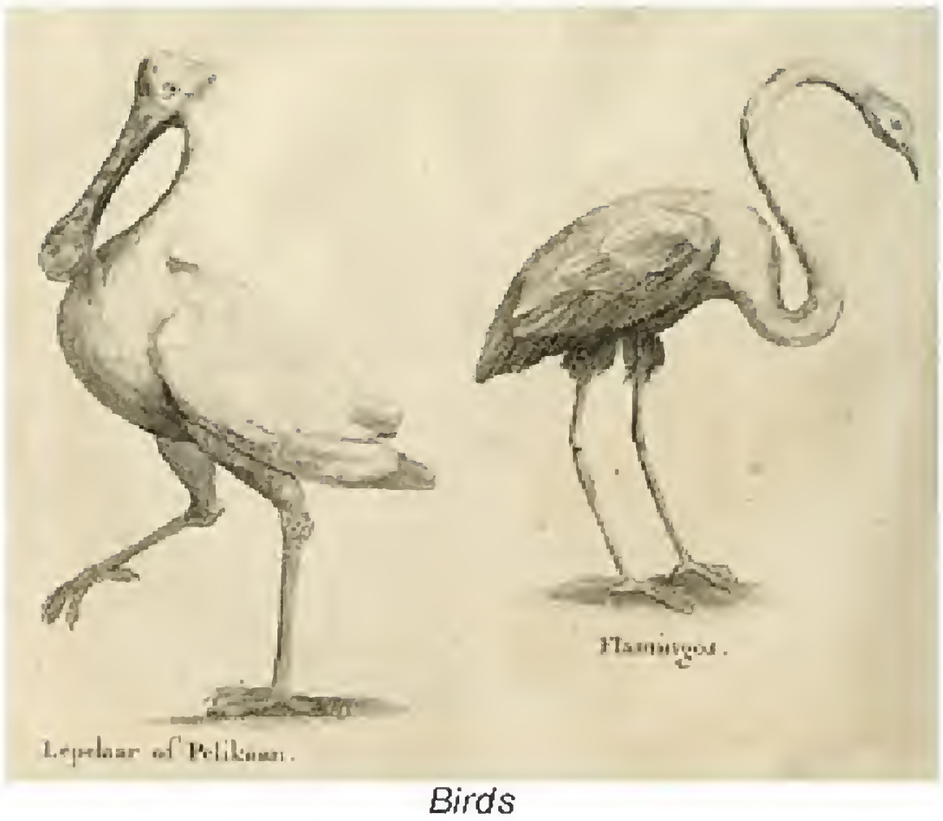
Century: 12th
Originally published in: Royal Bestiary
Now appears in: The Book of Fabulous Beasts by Joseph Nigg
(Also discussed in Wonder Beasts by the same author)
Phoenix legends in various forms have flourished since the days of Ancient Egypt. Perhaps the most common version of the legend says that the bird has red, purple and gold feathers, and jeweled eyes, and that it lives in a lovely garden that's always far away from wherever the phoenix legend happens to be told. When the bird realizes it's getting old, it builds itself a nest, catches fire from the sun's rays, and burns to ashes. From the ashes, a new, young bird rises. In this way, the phoenix is reborn over and over throughout eternity. A popular symbol in European heraldry, the phoenix is also a symbol of triumph over adversity — the comeback kid on steroids. Over the centuries, various scholars expressed skepticism about certain elements of the phoenix legend, but many people believed the phoenix to be real.

Phoenix

Year: c. 1356
Scientist: Sir John Mandeville
Originally published in: Travels
Now appears in: The Book of Fabulous Beasts by Joseph Nigg
In his Travels, Mandeville wrote that the priests of the temple of Heliopolis relayed the story of the phoenix, "and there is none but one in all the world. And he cometh to burn himself upon the altar of that temple at the end of five hundred year; for so long he liveth. And at the five hundred years' end, the priests array their altar honestly . . . and then the bird phoenix cometh and burneth himself to ashes." This poor phoenix, adorned with what appears to be an avian crown, looks less than happy to be on fire.

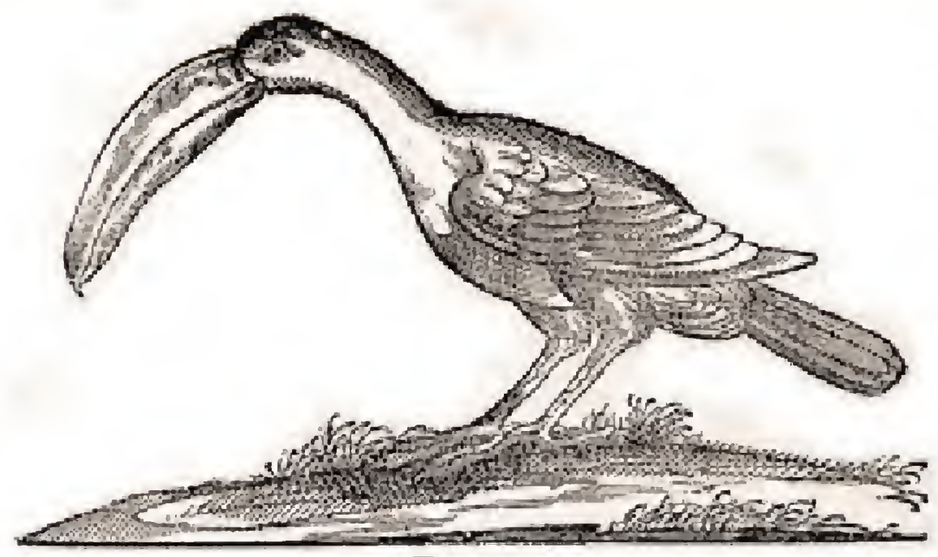
Year: 1584
Scientist: Geofroy Linocier
Originally published in: Histoire des Animaux singuliers
Material discussed in: The Book of Fabulous Beasts by Joseph Nigg
Though he didn't believe it, Herodotus relayed the Egyptian tale of a bird flying out of Arabia every 500 years. On each trip, the story went, the phoenix "brings the parent bird, all

dealing with its nemesis: "He defends himself against the Raven, his enemy, whom he holds by the throat, and will carry him out to sea, and drown him, before he looses his hold."



Birds

Year: 1727
Scientist: Peter Kolb
Originally published in: Naaukeurige en uitvoerige beschryving van kaap de Goede Hoop
Image provided by: Biodiversity Heritage Library (some rights reserved)
The one on the left is labeled a pelican and the one on the right is labeled a flamingo. The pelican depiction accurately depicts that the animal is a bird with a beak, legs, feet, wings and feathers, yet this bird bears little resemblance to an actual pelican. The flamingo is much closer yet still not quite right.


Toucan

Year: 1651
Scientist: Johannes Faber
Originally published in: Thesaurus
Now appears in: The Eye of the Lynx by David Freedberg
This depiction of a toucan isn't a bad job, except that this bird's delicate body and slender neck hardly look robust enough to hold up that big, honking bill. Despite its size, however, the bill is actually pretty light, which would be necessary for the bird to fly. The same thesaurus that made a near miss in depicting the toucan took the intriguing step of showing the contents of eggs, both avian and reptilian.
Larger image available

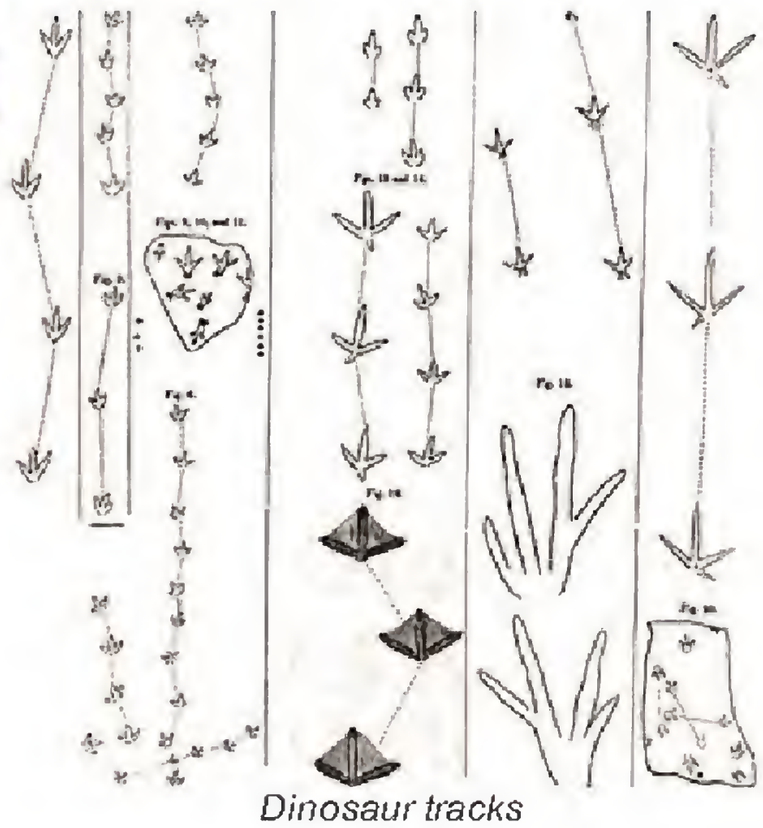
Bird vignette

Year: 1734
Scientist: Albertus Seba
Artist: J. Fortuÿn (coloration)
Originally published in: Thesaurus
Now appears in: Natural Curiosities from the Cabinet of Albertus Seba by Albertus Seba
This is part of a vignette of birds in Seba's four-volume work on plant and animal life. The big white crest on the left belongs, not surprisingly, to a cockatoo. The bird in the upper right that appears to smile is a tricolored blackbird. The parrot below it is a hawk-headed parrot. Both birds a generally accurate except for some slight mistakes in color. The technology for color printing was centuries off, so people fortunate enough to afford Seba's Thesaurus were hopefully also fortunate enough to

afford a colorist to add the correct pigments, Regrettably, Seba's text didn't provide much guidance on color, so mistakes occasionally crept in. The hummingbird's color may be exactly right, depending on the species, although the shape of the wings is off. And one suspects that Seba never saw one of these iridescent jewels in flight; if he had, he might have depicted the wings as a blur.
Larger image available

Vain bird

Year: 1735
Scientist: Albertus Seba
Artist: J. Fortuÿn (coloration)
Originally published in: Thesaurus
Now appears in: A Cabinet of Natural Curiosities by Albertus Seba
Seba describes this simply as a bird from America, and the creature is clearly quite proud of its tail. (If you had such a pretty tail, wouldn't you be equally proud?)
Larger image available


Dinosaur tracks

Year: 1836
Scientist: Edward Hitchcock
Originally published in: "Ornithichnology: Description of the Foot Marks of Birds (Ornithichnites) on New Red Sandstone in Massachusetts" in American Journal of Science and the Fine Arts
Now appears in: The Dinosaur Papers by Weishampel and White
After locals found "turkey" tracks in the Connecticut Valley, Hitchcock rushed to the scene to examine what they had found. He described the tracks of large and small "birds," some with thick toes and some with skinny toes. Hitchcock speculated that the littler tracks might have been made by juveniles. He stuck to his interpretation even as evidence mounted of strange prehistoric reptiles. In 1904, Richard Swann Lull of Yale University determined that these tracks belonged to dinosaurs.
Expanded image available

Narrative text and graphic design © by Michon Scott - Updated November 2, 2014

Phoenix

plastered over with myrrh, to the Temple of the Sun, and there buries its body." In subsequent centuries, the Phoenix became a symbol of the resurrection for Christians, and by the 4th century AD, fire became pivotal to the bird's story, reducing the animal to ashes from which it would be reborn. Both the sun and flames figure into this 16th-century woodcut.

Cranes

Century: Early 14th
Originally published in: Peterborough Bestiary
Now appears in: The Bedside Book of Birds by Graeme Gibson
"Cranes divide the night into sentry-duties and they make up the sequence of the watches by order of rank, holding little stones in their claws to ward off sleep," the bestiary explained. "When there is danger they make a loud cry." Given the deferential poses of most of the birds in this picture, this nicely gilded illumination apparently shows an officer crane, small white stone in claw, inspecting the troops.

Bird with human face

Year: 1491
Scientist: Johanne Wonnecke von Caub
Originally published in: Hortus Sanitatis
Now appears in: Birds: The Art of Ornithology by Jonathan Elphick
Highly influential if not terribly accurate, Hortus Sanitatis ("Garden of Health") focused on the medicinal uses of plants, minerals and animals. This illustration dates from a reprint of an edition released in Germany in 1485.

Goose barnacle

Year: 1581
Scientist/artist: Mathias de L'Obel
Originally published in: Plantarum, Seu Stirpium Icones
Now appears in: The Jewel House by Deborah Harkness and The Book of Fabulous Beasts by Joseph Nigg
By the 16th century, many scholars had turned their efforts toward understanding what really happens in the wild, but errors persisted about both animals and plants. One of the best examples of this was the fabled barnacle goose. While prestigious printers were publishing

the Herball of botanist John Gerard, they fielded a complaint that he had appropriated the work of fellow plant lover Mathias de L'Obel — and done a sloppy job at that. L'Obel was briefly retained to tidy up Gerard's book, but didn't fix up the whole thing. Before Gerard published his version of the barnacle goose, L'Obel published his own. The creature was said to come from a tree in northern Scotland that sprouted barnacles instead of fruit. The long-lasting fable of the barnacle goose may have been inspired partly by convenience — or hunger. A Welsh ecclesiastic traveling through Ireland around the turn of the 13th century observed, "In some parts of Ireland, bishops and men of religion make no scruple of eating these birds on fasting days, as not being flesh, because they are not born of flesh."
Larger image available

Tree geese

Century: 13th
Originally published in: Bestiary
Now appears in: The Book of Fabulous Beasts and Sea Monsters by Joseph Nigg
Errors that persisted in the 16th century developed long before. Folklore recorded around the 10th century, including what was probably considered common knowledge at the time, said that certain kinds of geese grew from trees. Not everyone believed it, however. In the 13th century, the German Dominican friar and bishop Albertus Magnus observed geese mating and laying eggs, and he called the legend absurd. Such commentary wasn't enough to dissuade the 16th-century naturalist Conrad Gesner from describing the animal, though he apparently did so with trepidation.

Caladrius

Century: 13th
Originally published in: Medieval manuscript
Now appears at: A Caladrius Bird Digital image courtesy of the Getty's Open Content Program
Discussed in: The Book of Fabulous Beasts by Joseph Nigg
Said to be snowy white and reside in royal courts, the caladrius (or charadrius) bird was thought much more useful than a doctor. Medieval Europeans did not believe the caladrius could heal everyone, but they did believe that the bird could tell whether a sick person would live or die. When the patient was beyond help, the bird would avert its eyes. When the patient could be healed, the caladrius would peer into the patient's eyes, absorb the sickness, and fly toward the sun to burn off the malady. Not surprisingly, the bird was a symbol of Christ.

Year: 1593
Scientist: Cornelis de Jode
Originally published in: Speculum Orbis Terrae
Now appears in: Sea Monsters on Medieval and Renaissance Maps by Chet Van Duzer
In 1578, Gerard de Jode published an atlas, Speculum Orbis Terrarum. Fifteen years later,

Bird-fish

his son Cornelis published a revision with a slightly different title. In the new atlas, a map titled Novae Guineae Forma and Situs featured this strange hybrid creature. Its head and neck are those of a bird, but most of the rest of its body belongs to a fish. The wings look bat-like, although they might just be very stylized bird wings. Perhaps tales of fishy birds stemmed from swift sightings of fish leaping out of the water, or birds flying off with their fish dinners. But the younger de Jode published pictures and relayed legends of other odd creatures, too, including a goose with four fins and an aquatic wolf. Like other places far from the homes of European readers, the islands depicted in de Jode's atlas probably seemed like perfectly suitable homes for weird animals.
Larger image available

Goose-fish

Year: 1593
Scientist: Cornelis de Jode
Originally published in: Speculum Orbis Terrae
Now appears in: Sea Monsters on Medieval and Renaissance Maps by Chet Van Duzer
Father-and-son publishers Gerard and Cornelis de Jode included numerous hybrid creatures in their atlases. Called an aloes, this marine goose was believed to inhabit the New World. It was originally described by André Thevet, an eccentric-explorer priest who visited Brazil in the mid-16th century. The aloes reputedly resembled a goose with the exception of fins instead of feet. This picture might have looked more like a monster (and more like an actual goose) if it had been depicted chasing passers-by and blowing raspberries.
Larger image available

Waldrapp

Year: 1617
Scientist: Conrad Gesner
Originally published in: Historia Animalium
Now appears in: On Rare Birds by Anita Albus
Renaissance naturalists passed along plenty of tall tales about odd creatures, but sometimes they erred too much on the side of caution. This might have been the case with Gesner's depiction of the waldrapp, native to Africa, the Middle East, and southern Europe. Gesner depicted the bird with a crest vaguely like that of a blue jay or cardinal, but another name for the waldrapp is "bald ibis." It has long feathers on the back of its head, but they are

situated behind a bald head. In short, the waldrapp is much weirder than Gesner imagined.
Larger image available

Goatsucker

Year: 1617
Scientist: Conrad Gesner
Originally published in: Historia Animalium
Now appears in: On Rare Birds by Anita Albus
For many years, ugly rumors persisted about nightjars, and the rumors gave them a less flattering moniker: goatsucker. According to Pliny, the troublesome bird would enter goat pens at night, drink milk from a she-goat teat (gross), leave the teat permanently dry and the goat permanently blind (weird), and fly off without a backward glance (cavalier). The bird's unpleasant reputation might have had something to do with its habit of becoming active at night, when more respectable creatures were asleep.

Expanded image available

Bird of Paradise

Year: 1555
Scientists/artists: Conrad Gesner, Conrad Peutinger
Originally published in: Historia Animalium
Now appears in: The Great Naturalists edited by Robert Huxley
The antiquarian Peutinger gave the Swiss naturalist Gesner a picture of the fantastic bird of paradise, and Gesner dutifully reported that a specimen had been for sale in Nuremberg for 100 talers. A legend that persisted for many years about the bird — and enhanced its mythological status — was that it had no feet. The origin of the legend turned out to be prosaic. Descriptions of this bird were usually based on stuffed specimens whose feet had been removed.

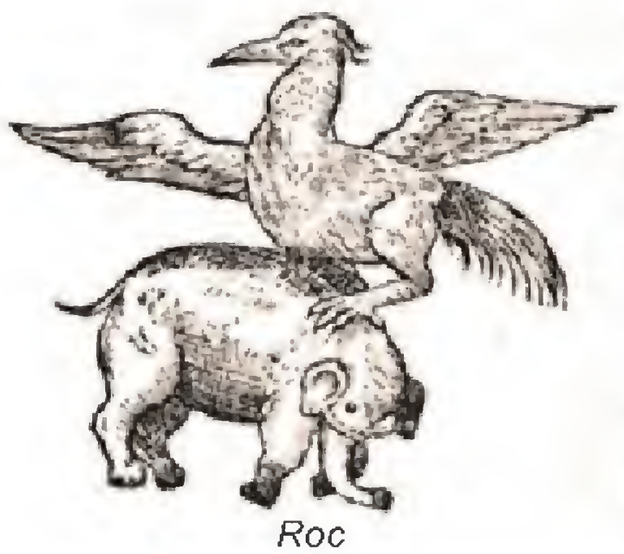
Pelican head

Year: 1555
Scientists/artists: Conrad Gesner
Originally published in: Historia Animalium
Now appears in: "The Sources of Gessner's Pictures for the Historia Animalium" by S. Kusukawa in Annals of Science
This pelican head rendition, sent to Gesner by a "certain painter" appeared in a trio of images, the other two

being an illustration of a specimen Gesner saw himself, and a picture copied from a map by Olaus Magnus. Needless to say, Gesner had the most confidence in the pelican he saw with his own eyes. Gesner often included multiple versions of plant or animal illustrations, even when the images contradicted each other. The figure copied from Olaus Magnus appeared the furthest from the truth. It sported a rooster comb and dragon-like feet attached to a body shaped like a duck's.
Expanded image available

Urogallo

Year: 1555
Scientists/artists: Conrad Gesner
Originally published in: Historia Animalium
Now appears in: Early Birds: A Selection of Bird Books from Belon to Audubon
(https://www.ideals.illinois.edu/bitstream/handle/2142/27669/Early%20Bird%20CS3.pdf)
Gesner devoted the third volume of his Historia Animalium to birds. That volume included this semi-accurate illustration of a grouse, or urogallo. This picture of from a copy, in the collections of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, that was hand-colored after printing, something well-off book buyers could afford before the days of color printing.


Roc

Year: 1599
Scientist: Ulisse Aldrovandi
Originally published in: Ornithologia
Now appears in: "'Roc': An Eastern Prodigy in a Dutch Engraving" by Rudolph Wittkower in Journal of the Warburg Institute (Also discussed in Fabulous Beasts by Joseph Nigg)
As Europeans traveled the world with increasing frequency, they encountered strange animals and stranger legends. Multiple travelers brought back to Europe from the East stories of the roc or rukh, a bird of astonishing size. Perhaps derived from the Persian term for a magical bird called the "simurgh," the roc appeared in works on geography as well as fairy tales, and it often appeared carrying an elephant. Ulisse Aldrovandi wasn't the only naturalist to pass along roc renditions. The bird also appeared in the work of the publisher Matthias Merian. In his 1875 book on giant bird legends, Sir Henry Yule suggested that the roc legend relayed by Marco Polo might have had origins in fossil remains, citing the similarity of big bird legends from New Zealand to Madagascar. Sir Richard Owen's description of the extinct moa from New Zealand might have helped Yule to this conclusion.

Century: 12th BC
Now appears in: Dragons, Unicorns, and Sea Serpents by Charles Gould

Fung Hwang

In 1886, Charles Gould reproduced this picture of the Fung Hwang, or Chinese Phoenix. In fact, the male was called Fung, and the female called Hwang. Just as dragons could be auspicious, so could these birds, said to tower over most people and enjoy music.
Larger image available

Ostrich

Year: 1573-1585
Scientist: Ambroise Paré
Originally published in: Des Monstres
Now appears in: On Monsters and Marvels by Ambroise Paré, translated by Janis Pallister
Though it probably looked monstrous to Renaissance Europeans, this depiction of an ostrich was pretty accurate. Paré described the ostrich in detail, and included a drawing of its skeleton. Paré borrowed a lot of his illustrations from the naturalist Conrad Gesner, and Gesner relied heavily on an old bestiary that was likely assembled in the fourth century. Calling the ostrich a "sparrow camel," the bestiary claimed that the giant bird would ditch its eggs in the sand, return some time later, and hatch the eggs by staring at them. This fit with the belief that eyes emitted a kind of ray or light beam.

Ostrich

Year: 1675
Scientist: Athanasius Kircher
Originally published in: Arca Noë
Now appears in: Athanasius Kircher's Theatre of the World by Joscelyn Godwin
Like his predecessors, the German Jesuit polymath Kircher struggled to describe the ostrich. As naturalists had a century before, Kircher concluded that some of the creature's qualities — having feathers and laying eggs — placed it in the category of birds. But its massive body looked more like a camel's. An unfussy eater, the bird also had the singular capacity, he explained, to digest iron "either to strengthen its stomach or for some hidden ailment." While Kircher didn't accuse the ostrich of hiding its head in the sand, he did state that the animal plunges its head into dense shrubs "and fancies that if its head cannot be seen, neither can the rest of its body."

Century: 13th
Originally published in: Medieval manuscript
Now appears at: An Ostrich Digital image courtesy of the Getty's Open Content Program
Produced in the late 13th century, this picture of an ostrich got some things right, namely the long legs and robust thighs. Unfortunately, the catlike ears and paw feet attract more

Ostrich

attention. Given how rare ostriches must have been in medieval Europe, though, this depiction is impressive for the time. Whether the illuminator understood that the ostrich is a flightless bird is hard to tell.

Eagle

Year: 1675
Scientist: Athanasius Kircher
Originally published in: Arca Noë
Now appears in: Athanasius Kircher's Theatre of the World by Joscelyn Godwin
Along with this picture of a vulture, Kircher relayed a story of one Father Joannes Baptista Cysatus, a mathematician of the Society of Jesus, who ascended a rocky mountain "never before penetrated by man." The remote mountain sported a crater with an oak tree growing in its center. The tree held a huge nest with three nestlings. Alas for the curious Jesuit, the parents were returning to the nest, and thanks only to his well-armed companions, the curious Jesuit escaped death. Unfortunately for the nestlings, their mother did not. Besides reporting the freshly killed mother's 12-foot wingspan, the brethren took stock of the detritus below the tree: skulls of rabbits, dogs, sheep and human children, as well as deboned goats and assorted fish parts.

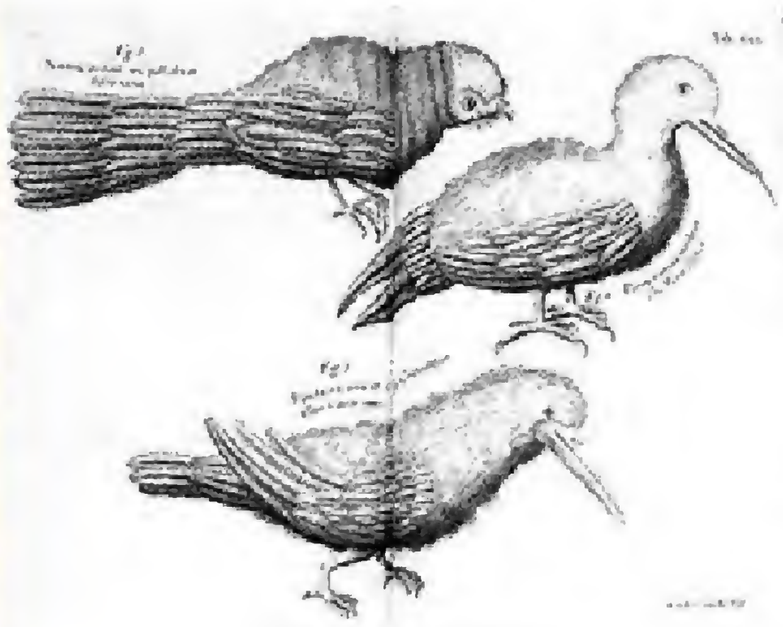
Pelican

Year: c. 1515
Originally published in: Physiologus
Now appears in: Beasts: Factual and Fantastic by Elizabeth Morrison © J. Paul Getty Museum
In an obvious parallel to Christ, the mother pelican was said to peck her own side and use her own blood to revive her dead chicks. A 16th-century bestiary shows a devoted mother pelican doing just that.

Year: 1584
Scientist: Geofroy Linocier
Originally published in: Histoire des Animaux singuliers
This 16th-century woodcut offers yet another depiction of the selfless pelican mother feeding her babies with her own blood. The image was perhaps intended to serve as a parable of good human parenting more than a realistic account of pelican life.

Years: 1707-1725
Scientist: Hans Sloane
Originally published in: Voyage to the Islands Madera, Barbados, Nieves, S. Christophers and Jamaica

Pelican



Birds of Jamaica

Now appears in: Birds: The Art of Ornithology by Jonathan Elphick
Sloane labeled the bird at the top of this arrangement a "Small Wood-owl" though it was likely a nightjar. He likened the bristly feathers around the bill to a "Cat's Mustachoes." The birds' feathers all look a little plump and stiff, and the birds all have oddly humanlike expressions, but this illustration isn't a bad effort for a young naturalist in a strange land. Sloane didn't get to spend as much time as he had hoped in Jamaica. He had been hired as the personal physician of the Second Duke of Albemarle, but the duke died an untimely death, and the young naturalist-physician had to return home.

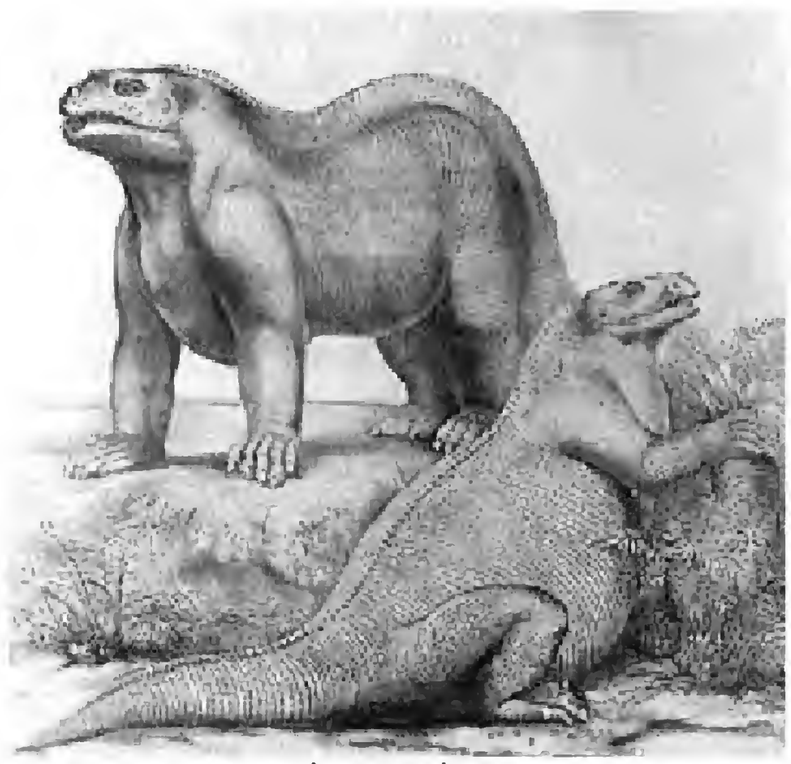
Birds

Year: 1707-1725
Scientist: Hans Sloane
Originally published in: Voyage to the Islands Madera, Barbados, Nieves, S. Christophers and Jamaica
Now appears in: The Great Naturalists edited by Robert Huxley
Upon returning from Jamaica, Hans Sloane published "big as life" pictures of the animals he saw there, including this trio of birds. The bird at lower left is described as a bittern, though it sports a somewhat serpentine neck. The little bird in the upper right Sloane called the "green sparrow" or "green hummingbird," and he described it as one of the most beautiful birds he ever saw. The picture might represent a Jamaican tody, and while it is no iridescent hummingbird, its characterization as a beautiful bird is well justified.
Larger image available

Birds

Year: 1755
Scientist: Erich Pontoppidan
Originally published in: The Natural History of Norway
Image provided by: Biodiversity Heritage Library (some rights reserved)
This assortment of birds includes a "Cock of the Wood," perhaps meant to be a woodpecker, in the lower right corner. Pontoppidan described it as "a large Wood-bird, in the general appearance not unlike an Eagle, and is the largest of all the eatable Birds in the country." The bird depicted next to it, captioned as "The Pope," was said to have a "striped prettily" but very sharp beak. Pontoppidan alleged that this bird had a no-nonsense method of

Despised in the West and revered in the East, dragons have a long history in human mythology. How did the myth start? No one knows the exact answer, but some myths may have been inspired by living reptiles, and some "dragon" bones probably belonged to animals long extinct — in some cases dinosaurs, in others, fossil mammals. Starting in the early 19th century, scientists began to find a new kind of monster, one that had gone extinct tens of millions of years before the first humans evolved. Because the first fragments found looked lizard-like, paleontologists assumed they had found giant lizards, but more bones revealed animals like nothing on earth today. Did these terrible lizards ever coexist with people? No. Neither did pterosaurs. Dinosaur fossils just don't turn up in the same rock layers as human remains. Although some creationists claim that medieval dragons were really ruling reptiles of the Mesozoic that survived into modern times, this notion enjoys no support from any credible scientist.



Iguanodon

Year: 1853
Scientist: Sir Richard Owen
Artist: Benjamin Waterhouse Hawkins (engraving of reconstructions)
Originally appeared in: Crystal Palace Park, London
Now appears in: The Reign of the Dinosaurs by Jean-Guy Michard, Scenes from Deep Time: Early Pictorial Representations of the Prehistoric World by Martin J.S. Rudwick and Gideon Mantell and the Discovery of Dinosaurs by Dennis R. Dean
Sir Richard Owen, who originally proposed the term Dinosauria, personally supervised the sculpture of these beasts. When the sculptures were complete, he then dined with 20 dignitaries in the belly of a reconstructed Iguanodon. Gideon Mantell, who discovered and named this dinosaur, had been invited to participate in the reconstruction, but withdrew from the project because he disliked the idea of life-size models, and perhaps disliked Richard Owen even more. (As any eight-year-old can tell you, this Iguanodon reconstruction had some mistakes. The horn on its snout was later determined to be a specialized toe, the animal was later found to be primarily bipedal, and the tail wasn't droopy.)
Larger image available

Year: 1853
Scientist: Sir Richard Owen
Artist: Benjamin Waterhouse Hawkins
Still appears in: Crystal Palace Park, London (photo by Michon Scott)
Hawkins and Owen's reconstructions can still be seen Crystal Palace, easily accessible through London's public transportation system. After more fossil finds led to a better understanding of dinosaur anatomy and locomotion, scientists and members of the public alike came to regard these statues with something less than admiration, and they fell into disrepair, staying shabby through the 20th century. A refurbishment project undertaken

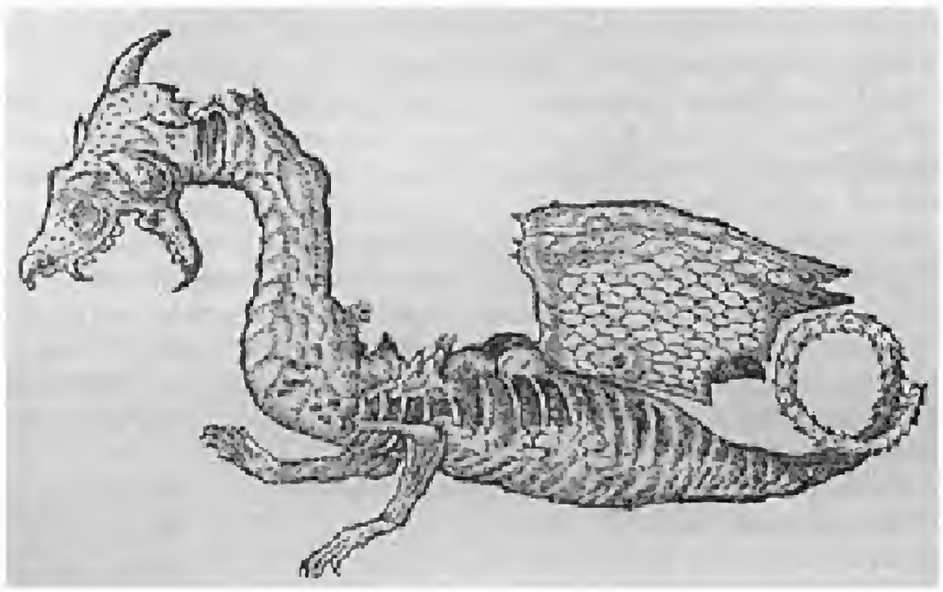
O'Connor argues, Tayler used the same sort of bait the geologists did: pictures of prehistoric beasts. The frontispiece of his book showed smiling marine reptiles and a very lizard-like dinosaur. The spike on its snout suggests it was Iguanodon. More complete fossil finds eventually showed paleontologists that the spike really resided on the dinosaur's thumb. Larger image available

Ruling reptiles

Year: 1911
Author: Edwin Grew
Originally published in: Romance of Modern Geology
Now appears in: "Dr. Arthur Conan Doyle's Contribution to the Popularity of Pterodactyls" by David Martill and Tony Pointon in Geological Society, London, Special Publications
A terrestrial and an avian reptile share space on this book cover, where Grew called pterosaurs "Dragons of the prime." The overall shape of the pterosaur isn't too bad, although its wings appear not quite up to the task keeping the fairly robust body aloft, and the long tail is characteristic of a species that would actually be much smaller. The terrestrial reptile below is presumably a dinosaur, although this one sports a lizard-like form that had largely been overturned by the time this book was published. The hapless animal in the big lizard's mouth looks like a platypus, and that might seem anachronistic in this ruling-reptile scene, but platypus-like fossils do date back to the time of the dinosaurs. The year after this book was published, Arthur Conan Doyle prominently featured pterosaurs in The Lost World, arguably making the flying reptiles far more popular (or infamous) to the general public than they ever had been before.

Dragon

Year: 1664-1678
Scientist/artist: Athanasius Kircher
Originally published in: Mundus Subterraneus
Now appears in: Fossils: Evidence of Vanished Worlds by Yvette Gayrard-Valy and Athanasius Kircher's Theatre of the World by Joscelyn Godwin
In his book about the subterranean world, the Jesuit Athanasius Kircher recounted the story of a great dragon slayer who succeeded in killing one of the dangerous beasts near a Swiss village. He also described the living habits of dragons, namely dwelling in underground caves and caverns. (Science historian Paula Findlen described Kircher as "perhaps the last naturalist to believe passionately in the reality of any papal dragon he saw.") This picture closely resembles an earlier illustration produced by a member of the scholarly Italian academy known as the Linceans. Although Western civilization largely abhorred dragons, Eastern cultures took a different view. "Dragon" bones, teeth and horns were used as a panacea by Chinese apothecaries. Dragon parts were believed to cure ailments of the heart and liver, as well as constipation, nightmares and epilepsy. Chinese apothecaries proved invaluable to fossil hunters in later centuries by showing them fossil sites.



Dragon

Year: 1651
Scientist/artist: Johannes Faber
Originally published in: Thesaurus
Now appears in: The Eye of the Lynx by David Freedberg
Kircher likely based his dragon depiction on a similar engraving done by Faber, a member of the Lincean (or Lyncean) Academy in Italy. The Linceans set out with the ambitious agenda to be "slaves neither of Aristotle nor any other philosopher, but of noble and free intellect in regard to physical things." Unfortunately, they still needed patrons. The influential Barberini family — with cardinals and Pope Urban VIII among its ranks — was fond of dragons. So while Faber entertained plenty of doubts about the accuracy of this dragon, he had to do what he had to do.
Larger image available

Saint Michael defeating the dragon

Year: c. 1430-1440
Artist: Master of Sir John Fastolf
Originally published in: Medieval manuscript
Now appears at: Saint Michael and the Dragon Digital image courtesy of the Getty's Open Content Program
One reason dragons were viewed so negatively by Europeans might be the fact that the beast symbolized the devil. The Book of Revelation mentions a war in heaven between the satanic dragon and Saint Michael the Archangel. The archangel, being stronger, defeats the dragon and kicks him out of heaven. Maybe not the best move, considering Satan and his fallen-angel groupies were believed to spend the many years that followed making mischief among impressionable humans. Whether or not it symbolized Satan, the dragon served as a handy adversary for any Western hero needing to prove his mettle.

Dragon sculture in Klagenfurt

Year: 1590
Scientist/artist: Ulrich Vogelsang
Photographed in: Klagenfurt, Austria by Janos Korom Dr. (some rights reserved)
Discussed in: The First Fossil Hunters by Adrienne Mayor
Sometime around 1335, quarrymen discovered the skull of a Pleistocene woolly rhinoceros in the region of Klagenfurt. The concepts of an ancient earth, ice ages and extinction were all pretty foreign to medieval and Renaissance Europeans, so the odd-looking skull was interpreted as something less real but at the same time more familiar: a dragon. Folklorist Adrienne Mayor points out that, even though it was presented as

a mythical beast, Vogelsang's sculpture "is often cited as the earliest known reconstruction of an extinct animal." Vogelsang's dragon was just one of many instances where fossil remains, in this case mammalian remains, were interpreted as dragon bones. But whether fossil bones provided the original inspiration for dragon myths is a tough question to answer. Dragon legends have existed for thousands of years in multiple cultures, and these mythical creatures haven't all looked or acted the same. Animals still living, such as some reptile or amphibian species, or simply the human imagination might have played a bigger role than fossils.

Dragon of Marduk

Year: c. 600 BC
Photographed in: Detroit Institute of Arts by Maia C. (some rights reserved)
Discussed in: The Natural History of Unicorns by Chris Lavers

This snake dragon graced Ishtar Gate around the inner city of Babylon, and was associated with the Neo-Babylonian deity Marduk. According to legend, the young and hungry Marduk acquired his pet after volunteering for combat and handily defeating a series of foes. This dainty dragon combines features of multiple animals. A horn (or perhaps two horns in perfect profile) on the head likens it to a unicorn. The creature sports mammalian front legs and avian hind legs with long, sharp claws. Scales run from the head to the apparently prehensile tail. A forked tongue protrudes from the dragon's rippled snout. Whether the dragon of Marduk was remotely inspired by, or intended to represent, an actual animal is hard to say, but Lavers argues that visitors to the intimidating monuments of imperial capitals may very well have taken images like this literally, fueling legends about fantastic creatures.

Fire-breathing dragon

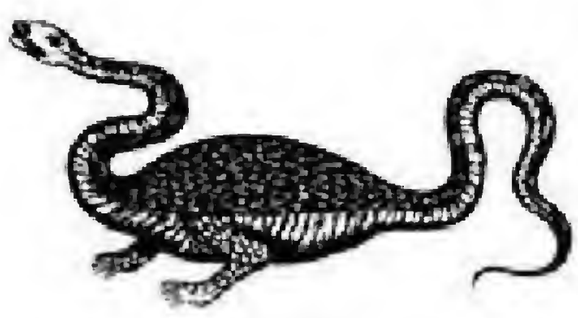
Year: c. 1260
Originally published in: Medieval bestiary
Now appears in: Beasts: Factual and Fantastic by Elizabeth Morrison © J. Paul Getty Museum
Discussed in: Medusa's Gaze and Vampire's Bite by Matt Kaplan

A feature common in medieval European dragon stories was a dragon's ability to breathe fire; Beowulf fought just such a beast in the epic poem from the early Middle Ages. Perhaps this worrisome dragon feat simply emerged from someone's desire to tell a really good story, but Kaplan highlights some intriguing possibilities from the real world. The furious dragon in Beowulf torched the local landscape after waking from a nap to find a valuable goblet had been stolen from its lair. In 2003, the husband-and-wife archaeologist/linguist team of Paul and Elizabeth Barber proposed that the fire-breathing dragon — which left no trace of itself once slain — might have been inspired by a real

phenomenon in medieval northern Europe, where dank burial chambers and decaying corpses provided the perfect nursery for methane-producing bacteria. If you were a grave robber in the Middle Ages looking for loot, you'd need to take a torch along for light, and if the flame from your torch ignited the methane, you might think you'd awakened a fire-breathing monster. Ancient miners armed with torches might also have stumbled into explosive gas deposits deep underground.

Jade dragon pendant

Century: 3rd BC
Appears at: Pendant in the Form of a Knotted Dragon © The Metropolitan Museum of Art
From the Metropolitan Museum of Art: "A conceptual as well as a technical tour de force, this pendant defies the obdurate character of jade and makes it appear to be impossibly supple and pliant. The pendant takes the form of a serpentine dragon, whose body is grooved to resemble twisted rope. The two ends of the dragon overlap to form a circular ring. One end has a flattened felinelike head with gaping jaws, bared fangs, and striations marking the eyebrow and upper lip. The other end loops behind the head and doubles back in an elegant counter curve. At the bottom of the ring, the sculptor further defies the nature of the medium by making the body appear to have tied itself in a double knot. The pendant was suspended from a small horizontal perforation drilled through the neck of the dragon at the apex of the ring, just behind the juncture of the two ends."
In contrast to the fire-spewing, bling-hoarding, virgin-chomping beasts of the West, dragons were viewed much more favorably in the East — cheerful animals that could bring life-giving rain. The Chinese prized jade perhaps as much as they prized dragons, and working such hard material would require tremendous skill.



Dragon

Year: 1664-1678
Scientist/artist: Athanasius Kircher
Originally published in: Mundus Subterraneus
Now appears in: Athanasius Kircher by Joscelyn Godwin
Kircher also included in Mundus Subterraneus this "small" dragon said to be found during the time of Pope Gregory XIII, who died in 1585. The creature was kept in the collection of the naturalist Ulisse Aldrovandi, a cousin of the newly elected pope. Unlike some of Kircher's other dragon pictures, this one lacks wings.
Larger image available

Year: c. 1471
Originally published in: Prayer Book of Charles the Bold
Now appears in: Beasts: Factual and Fantastic by Elizabeth Morrison © J. Paul Getty Museum
Regardless of how medieval Europeans felt about dragons, the magnificent beasts made magnificent decorations, such as this grouchy but cute little creature.

Century: 12th

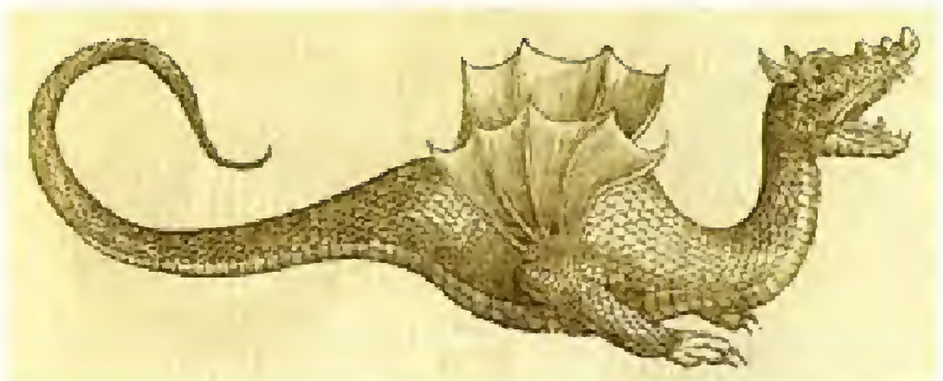
Dragon from manuscript

Dragon and elephant

Originally published in: Royal Bestiary
Now appears in: The Book of Fabulous Beasts by Joseph Nigg
This 12th-century bestiary illustration was likely influenced by the work of Isidore of Seville, who was influenced by the Classical scholar Pliny. Isidore was born around 560, and although he was a bishop, he introduced a certain degree of secularism to bestiaries.
Animals were animals, not necessarily living, breathing morality lessons existing just for the benefit of humans. The relaxation of the bestiary moral code, however, didn't keep folklore about fanciful animals out of Isidore's encyclopedia. Thanks to its sheer size, this dragon, or draco, poses a threat even to the elephant (which is rendered with impressive accuracy). According to legend, the dragon could entangle the elephant's legs and strangle the proboscidian.

Dragon

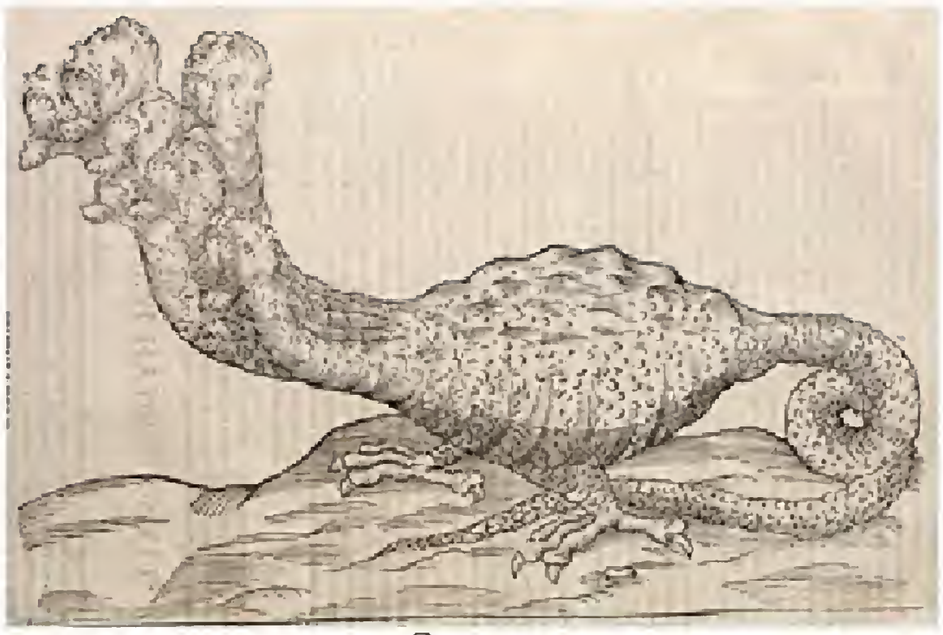
Year: 1572
Scientist/artist: Ulisse Aldrovandi
Originally published in: Tavole di Animali
Now appears in: Possessing Nature by Paula Findlen
Ulisse Aldrovandi produced his own description of the alleged dragon that was brought to him for inspection upon the elevation of Pope Gregory XIII. Aldrovandi immediately set to work writing about the animal, even looking into the commonly held belief of the time that serpents arose from eggs laid by roosters. Meanwhile, locals saw the dragon as an omen of bad times ahead.
Larger image available



Dragon

Year: 1640
Scientist/artist: Ulisse Aldrovandi
Originally published in: Liber Serpentium et Draconum
Now appears in: Amazing Rare Things by Attenborough, Owens, Clayton and Alexandratos
Aldrovandi did more than collect alleged dragon carcasses, he also published descriptions of them, complete with illustrations. Europeans of Aldrovandi's time believed in several different kinds of dragons, some without legs, some with two legs, some with four legs, even some with eight legs. No one less than Leonardo da Vinci gave serious consideration to how and where a dragon's wings would attach.

Larger image available



Dragon

Year: 1640
Scientist/artist: Ulisse Aldrovandi
Originally published in: Liber Serpentium et Draconum
Image provided by: Biodiversity Heritage Library (some rights reserved)
This fantastic creature mixes traits of multiple animals (bird feet, serpent tail, shark teeth, mottled fog skin) and combines them with a trait of a monster (seven heads). This picture roughly resembles the hydra woodcut published nearly a century earlier by Conrad Gesner, and a woodcut very much like Gesner's hydra appears on the preceding page of Aldrovandi's book. In all likelihood the similar creatures were derived from the seven-headed beast in the Book of Revelation, itself a metaphor for Rome's famed seven hills. Aldrovandi remained fascinated by dragons, seven-headed and single-headed, all his life.

Starry Salamander

Year: 1560
Scientists/artists: Conrad Gesner
Published in: Icones Animalium
Now appears in: "The Sources of Gessner's Pictures for the Historia Animalium" by S. Kusukawa in Annals of Science
This so-called salamander has birdlike feet, fur, a remarkably knobby head, a piggish nose, ears, and a neat row of stars running down its back. Gesner made his share of mistakes about the natural world, but by the time he reproduced this illustration in Icones Animalium, he knew quite well it was wrong. He didn't have a problem with publishing conflicting illustrations, especially when he could compare a bad example to a better one. By showing this image along with a more accurate rendition, Gesner probably hoped to clear up misconceptions.
Expanded image available

Winged dragon

Year: 1658
Scientists/artists: Conrad Gesner and Edward Topsell
Published in: Historie of Foure-Footed Beastes and Serpents
Now appears in: Topsell's Histories of Beasts edited by Malcolm South
Topsell did not present dragons as uniformly evil, but instead as creatures of a mixed nature. He also described the animals' medicinal values. "First, the fat of a dragon dried in the sun is good against creeping ulcers; and the same mingled with honey and oil helps the dimness of the eyes. . . . The head of a dragon keeps one from looking asquint. . . . The fat of dragons is

of such virtue that it drives away venomous beasts. It is also reported that by the tongue or gall of a dragon boiled in wine men are delivered from the spirits of the night called incubi and succubi, or else nightmares."
Larger image available

Horned dragon

Year: 1658
Scientist: Edward Topsell
Published in: Historie of Foure-Footed Beastes and Serpents
Now appears at: Topsell's Historie of Foure-Footed Beastes at the University of Houston Digital Library
This dragon appeared in the same illustration as the snakelike winged creature above. Topsell believed in nearly endless dragon variety, writing, "There are divers sorts of dragons, distinguished by their countries, partly by their quantity and magnitude, and party by the different form of their external parts. Some dragons have wings and no feet; some have both feet and wings, and some have neither feet nor wings, but are only distinguished from the common sort of serpents by a comb upon their heads and by a beard under their cheeks." The feature on this dragon's head looks not so much like a comb as a pair of devilish horns.

Snake egg thief

Year: 1497
Originally appeared in: Medieval woodcut
Now appears in: The Star-Crossed Stone by Kenneth J. McNamara
Medieval Europeans didn't feel much affection for snakes, but still coveted snake eggs, believing they had magical powers. No less an authority than Pliny passed along advice on how to procure one of the precious items. The intrepid snake egg thief had to leap over a writhing mass of hissing snakes, toss the snake egg into the air, and apparently catch it in a piece of cloth. Another interpretation of the heist was that the snakes themselves would loft the eggs into the air. Either way, if the snake egg fell to the ground, so the rulebook read, its magical powers were lost. The only problem was that the objects thought to be snake eggs were really fossil sea urchins. Alternately called fairy loaves, pixie weights and shepherds' crowns, the fossils were believed to protect against bad luck, protect against illness, safeguard their owners from lightning, help the deceased on their journey to the afterlife, or help the deceased return to life. Humans apparently have a long history of collecting and revering fossil sea urchins. A hand axe with a fossil urchin embedded in it has been attributed to Homo heidelbergensis.
Larger image available

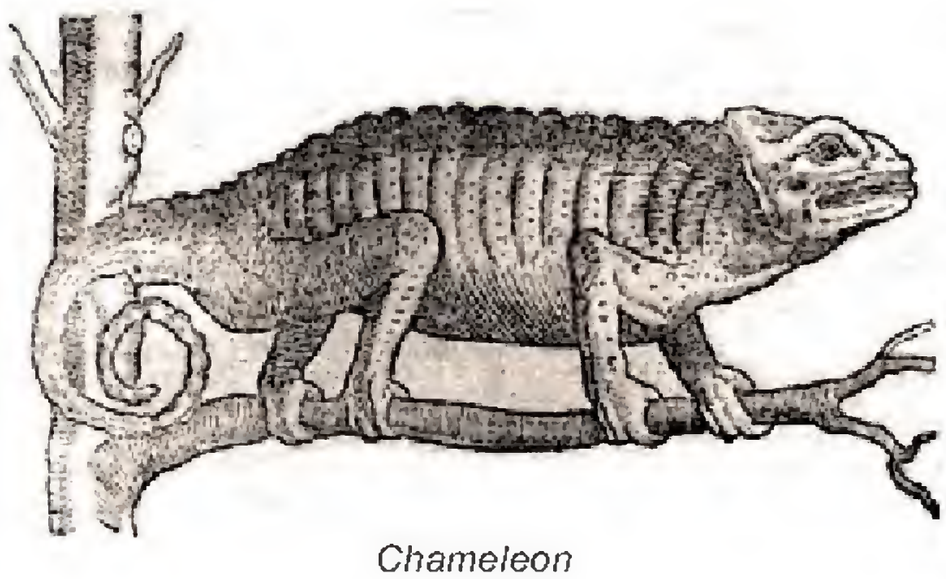
Century: Early 17th
Scientist/artist: Crispin de Passe
Published in: America
Now appears in: "The Basilisk and Rattlesnake, or a European Monster Comes to America" by Boria Sax in Society and Animals

Basilisk-Rattlesnake

This engraving, which was not necessarily intended to be taken literally, shows a creature resembling a basilisk — a creepy hybrid animal with avian and reptilian characteristics. Europeans thought the basilisk could kill with its malevolent gaze, and the same quality was attributed to the American rattlesnake. Although rattlesnakes eat plenty of other reptiles, early accounts of their diet listed only "higher" animals like birds and small mammals. Sax argues that, in the European mindset, the evil-eye capability of basilisks and rattlesnakes could be explained by the envy that lowly types feel toward their betters.

Possum-Chameleon

Year: 1534
Scientist/artist: Andrea Alciati
Published in: Emblematum libellus
Now appears in: "Marcus Gheeraerts and the Aesopic Connection in Seventeenth-Century Scientific Illustration" by William B. Ashworth in Art Journal
Some of the earliest naturalist texts and illustrations took their inspiration from non-scientific sources, specifically emblem books and fables. That might explain this "chameleon," which looks very little like the reptile it's meant to represent, and more like a grouchy possum. Medieval and Renaissance naturalists often conveyed morals with their accounts of animal life and the chameleon, able to change colors, was disliked for its duplicity.



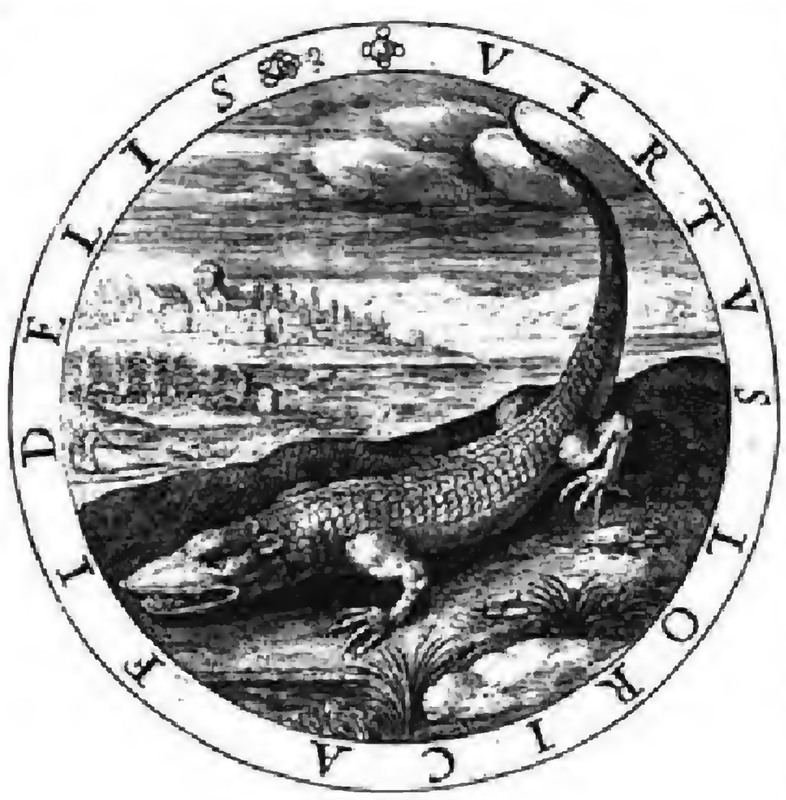
Chameleon

Year: 1553
Scientist/artist: Pierre Belon
Published in: De aquatilibus
Now appears in: "Marcus Gheeraerts and the Aesopic Connection in Seventeenth-Century Scientific Illustration" by William B. Ashworth in Art Journal
Two decades after Alciati's improbable chameleon, Pierre Belon introduced a far more accurate rendition. Not only does this chameleon look familiar to the modern viewer in general appearance, but it's also accurate in details many would miss. On its front feet, the chameleon has two outside toes and three inside toes. On its hind feet, the numbers are reversed. Even though this chameleon's leg posture looks a little odd, it illustrates the creature's strange toe arrangement. And it looks nothing like a possum.

Year: c. 1500
Originally published in: Hortus Sanitatis
Now appears in: Natural History in Shakespeare's Time by H.W. Seager

Chameleon

Image provided by: Biodiversity Heritage Library (some rights reserved)
In 1896, Herbert West Seager assembled a Goof Gallery of his own: a book entitled Natural History in Shakespeare's Time. He assembled passages of text from multiple sources, and used woodcuts photographed from Hortus Sanitatis. Seager's copy of the herbal was undated, but he pointed out to his readers that multiple editions of the book dated from 1490 to 1517. Although the passages Seager included about the species were entertaining, none of them come close to this woodcut. Madagascar — and everyplace else that chameleons live — must have been far away from the artist.



Emblem

Year: 1635
Scientist/artist: George Wither
Published in: A Collection of Emblemes
Now appears in: "Poor, Bare, Forked" by Laurie Shannon in Shakespeare Quarterly
Another example of animals as emblems included the crocodile, with the rather improbable characteristic of virtue (or "vertue"). After listing weapons people might acquire for their own protection, Wither warned in verse:
"If, therefore, thou thy *Spoylers,* wilt beguile,
Thou must be armed, like this *Crocodile;*
Ev'n with such nat'rall *Armour* (ev'ry day)
As no man can bestowe, or take away:
For, spitefull *Malice,* at one time or other,
Will pierce all borrowed *Armours.*"
With a canine mouth, birdlike legs, and a high-flying tail, this crocodile left a little room for improved realism, but it beat medieval bestiary crocodile pictures.
Larger image available

Crocodile and hydrus

Year: c. 1270
Originally published in: Bestiary
Now appears in: Beasts: Factual and Fantastic by Elizabeth Morrison © J. Paul Getty Museum
"The [hy]drus is a worthy enemy of the crocodile and has this characteristic and habit: When it sees a crocodile sleeping on the shore, it enters the crocodile through its open mouth, rolling itself in mud in order to slide more

easily down its throat. The crocodile therefore, instantly swallows the [hy]drus alive. But the [hy]drus, tearing open the crocodile's intestines, comes out whole and unharmed." True to bestiary tradition, the description offered a moral, namely that the crocodile represented death, and the hydrus represented Christ, who defeats death. Symbolic meaning aside, the hydrus might have been based on observations of some kind of water snake, albeit with the addition of feet and pointy ears; the crocodile clearly wasn't based on observation.

Crocodile and water snake

Century: 13th
Originally published in: Medieval manuscript
Now appears at: A Crocodile Devouring a Water Snake Digital image courtesy of the Getty's Open Content Program
The Getty Museum hosts more than one manuscript showing a furry crocodile fighting a losing battle. If, like the [hy]drus shown above, the water snake represents God defeating death, then this "water snake" might allude to the Trinity with its three heads. Not quite a typical snake, it also has legs, at least a hind set. Front legs, if they exist, are somewhere inside the unfortunate crocodile. The illustrator(s) who portrayed the beasts had apparently seen neither an actual crocodile nor an actual snake, but certainly knew how to wield gold leaf.

Dragons of Mount Pilate

Year: 1664-1678
Scientist/artist: Athanasius Kircher
Originally published in: Mundus Subterraneus
Now appears in: Dragons, Unicorns, and Sea Serpents by Charles Gould
Though the prospect of a dragon usually frightened Europeans, that wasn't always the case. Kircher relayed the story of a man from Lucerne who fell into a cavern while he traveled across Mount Pilate. The cavern had no exit and two dragons. Luckily they left the man alone. After six months, during which he apparently lived on nothing but water, he noticed the dragons fixing to fly away, and attached himself to one dragon's tail, hitching a ride home. After surviving six months of cohabitation with dragons, he dropped dead from resuming his regular diet. Dragons weren't the problem; dairy was.
Larger image available

Year: 1664-1678
Scientist/artist: Athanasius Kircher
Originally published in: Mundus Subterraneus
Now appears in: Dragons, Unicorns, and Sea Serpents by Charles Gould
Kircher showed yet another dragon, the Dragon of Drachenfeldt, fighting a knight in an underground cavern. This long-necked, bat-winged, donkey-eared, snake-tailed beast looks poised to do some very nasty damage to the knight's ankles.

Iguanodon sculpture

between 2002 and 2007 prettied them up, and they were then listed as buildings of architectural/historical interest.
Larger image available

Giant lizards and pterosaurs

Year: 1853

Scientist: Sir Richard Owen
Artist: Benjamin Waterhouse Hawkins (engraving of reconstructions)
Originally appeared in: Crystal Palace Park, London
Now appears in: Scenes from Deep Time: Early Pictorial Representations of the Prehistoric World by Martin J.S. Rudwick
Another offering from the Owen-Hawkins team included this depiction of "giant lizards and pterosauria." Because the earliest dinosaur fossils were fragmentary and vaguely resembled modern lizards, 19th-century paleontologists initially thought of them as big lizards. Yet Hawkins's "lizards" — like the Iguanodon reconstructions — have more of a mammalian pose, standing on four sturdy legs. Owen didn't accept evolution and preferred to show dinosaurs (the dominant life forms of the Mesozoic) resembling the dominant life forms of modern times. That would be mammals.
Larger image available

Hylaeosaurus sculpture

Year: 1853
Scientist: Sir Richard Owen
Artist: Benjamin Waterhouse Hawkins
Still appears in: Crystal Palace Park, London (photo by Michon Scott)
Besides Iguanodon and Megalosaurus, the Crystal Palace Park sculptures included Hylaeosaurus. Although Richard Owen favored mammalian postures for his dinosaur reconstructions, Hylaeosaurus looked more like a giant lizard — much more so than Iguanodon. Adding to its lizard-like appearance was a row of spikes running down its back. In fact, the spiny back was not in error, although more complete finds since Richard Owen's day show that the spines extended roughly from the hips to the tip of the tail. Hylaeosaurus was actually a type of ankylosaur — a heavily armored tank-like dinosaur bearing little resemblance to modern-day iguanas. At Crystal Palace Park, visitors typically approach Hylaeosaurus from

Knight fighting dragon

Larger image available

Frolicking serpents

Year: 1664-1678

Scientist/artist: Athanasius Kircher
Originally published in: Mundus Subterraneus
Image provided by: Biodiversity Heritage Library (some rights reserved)
In his two volumes of Mundus Subterraneus, Kircher discusses gravity, eclipses, weather, the sun and moon, subterranean men, giants, poisons and antidotes, astrology, fireworks, fossils, dragons, demons and more. Included among the lavish illustrations are maps — Eden before Eve bit into the apple, and homier places like the Black Forest. This excerpt of a Black Forest map shows Mummelsee, a lake that remains a popular tourist destination today. The map might be described as realistic were it not for the reptilian monsters frolicking in the water. Legends persist even now about water sprites and a king who likes to drag ladies under the waves.

King slaying dragon

Year: 1555
Scientist/artist: Olaus Magnus
Originally published in: History of Nordic Peoples
Now appears at: Olaus Magnus - History of the Nordic Peoples - Illustrations with Comments (http://www.avrosys.nu/prints/prints23-b-olausmagnus-intro.htm)
Olaus Magnus's book wasn't an account of far-off exotic people, but the story of his own country, Sweden. His familiarity with the land described, however, didn't prevent the occasional tall tale. This crude woodcut shows the noble King Harald and his loyal servant killing the dragon that was supposed to kill them. While the king drives a razor through the beast's navel, the servant boxes the poor thing about its ears with a femur and skull.

Year: c. 310
Originally appeared in: Piazza Armerina, Sicily
Now appears in: The First Fossil Hunters by Adrienne Mayor (Photo by Barbara Mayor)

Griffin

In the seventh century BC, ancient Greeks made contact with Saka-Scythian nomads who prospected for gold in the Gobi Desert. One of the legends that the Greeks gleaned from this contact was of the griffin — a lion-sized, four-legged, winged animal with a "cruel sharp beak" — that ferociously guarded its hoard of gold. (A more cautious account suggested that griffins didn't guard gold but simply lived near it, and carefully protected their young from all intruders.) This Roman mosaic shows a griffin drawn to a trap whose unfortunate bait is a man. Where did this legend come from? Twentieth-century excavations in the Gobi have unearthed Protoceratops and Psittacosaurus skeletons, both beaked dinosaurs, from the same regions where the nomads prospected. It's quite possible that gold seekers found these fossils eroding out of the desert sands and, making astute observations about their skeletal structures, speculated on the appearance of the live animal. If so, their guesses about griffins protecting their young proved correct — a 21st-century find in Liaoning, China revealed an adult Psittacosaurus apparently guarding 34 juveniles.

Eagle/griffin capitals

Year: c. 500 BC
Photographed in: Persepolis, Iran by Sebastià Giralt (some rights reserved)
Discussed in: The First Fossil Hunters by Adrienne Mayor, "Griffins and Arimaspeans" by Adrienne Mayor and Michael Heaney in Folklore, 1993 issue, and "Persia: Ancient Soul of Iran" by Marguerite del Guidice in National Geographic, August 2008 issue
Given its location along the route later known as the Silk Road, the Persian Empire was ideally placed to absorb cross-cultural legends such as griffins. Carved some 25 centuries ago, these griffins can still be seen in Persepolis, Iran, an ancient capital of the Persian Empire. According to a nearby interpretative sign, these eagle/griffin capitals (apparently meant to crown a column) were likely intended for use in a local structure, but were later rejected for some reason. After their discovery in the mid-20th century, the griffins were mounted on a short pillar for preservation. Like other griffin depictions, these creatures boast fearsome beaks and characteristic griffin ears, although they lack the customary wings.

Year: c. 510 BC
Photographed in: Louvre Museum, Paris, by Steven Zucker (some rights reserved)
Discussed at: Louvre: Frieze of Griffins (http://www.louvre.fr/en/oeuvre-notices/frieze-griffins)
Situated in modern-day Iran, Susa was an ancient city along the Royal Road of the Achaemenid (First Persian) Empire. In the early 20th century, Jacques de Morgan led a series of excavations at the Palace of Darius, recovering thousands of decorative bricks comprising portraits of mythological creatures. This reconstruction at the Louvre Museum shows a griffin, part of a larger group. This griffin is a composite animal, with front legs looking like a lion's, and back legs looking like an eagle's. It has birdlike wings but, in contrast to many other griffins, the head of a lion instead without any beak. On top of its head are two

Griffin frieze

curved goat horns pointing in opposite directions. This frieze must have presented an impressive image as it was, in the analysis of the Louvre, "charged with a symbolism relating to the Persian empire" whether or not it was intended to be viewed as a literal creature. Today, though, the curving goat horns might have an unintentionally comic effect, as they look a little like a jester's hat. Having to wear a silly hat might explain why the griffin looks so angry.

Gryphon

Year: 1675
Scientist/artist: Athanasius Kircher
Originally published in: Arca Noë
Now appears in: Athanasius Kircher and Athanasius Kircher's Theatre of the World by Joscelyn Godwin

This Baroque depiction of a griffin (or gryphon) appeared in Arca Noë (Noah's Ark). The book was dedicated to Charles II of Spain, who was just 12 years old at the time. Among mythical beasts like griffins, mermaids and unicorns, Kircher included more pedestrian animals like elephants, lions and dogs. Kircher actually harbored doubts about the existence of griffins, but he had heard reports of them from China. He remarked that if they did exist, griffins likely belonged in the same category as vultures and eagles, "which have grown to such size either through the nature of the region or the influx of the heavens; wherefore we exclude them from the Ark." By the time Kircher penned Arca Noë, discoveries of so many animals from exotic locations had considerably crowded the biblical vessel.

Griffin

Century: 14th
Originally appeared in: Statuto e Registro dei Cambiavalute (Rule and Register of Currency Exchange) Perugia
Now appears in: Nature and Its Symbols by Lucia Impelluso and Stephen Sartarelli

Griffins weren't considered all bad. In fact, their impressive combination of characteristics (eagle-like strength and lion-like vigilance) made them attractive as mascots, particularly for those who managed money. Feet firmly planted on a treasure chest, this griffin is clearly doing its job.

Year: c. 1425-1450
Appears at: Aquamanile in the Form of a Griffin © The Metropolitan Museum of Art

From the Metropolitan Museum of Art: "This magnificent aquamanile in the form of a griffin with (separately cast) outstretched wings can be grouped stylistically with the unicorn

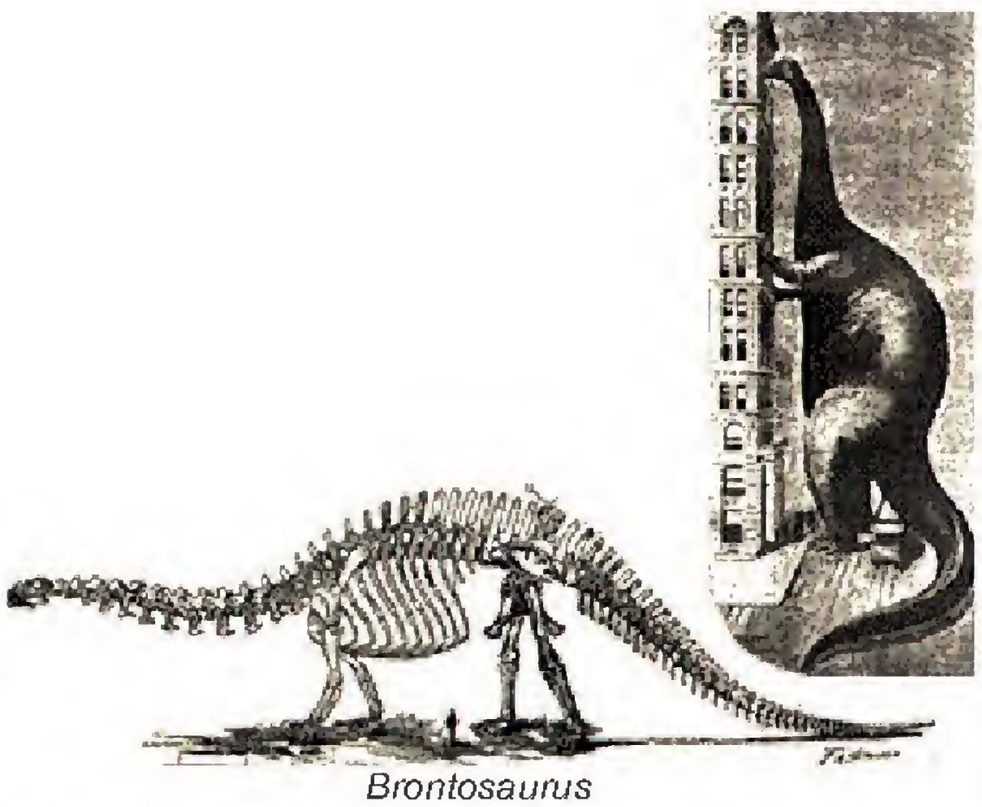
Griffin aquamanile

[another specimen at the museum] and a few other examples that were probably produced by the same Nuremberg workshop in the second quarter of the 15th century. The aquamanile was filled through a hole between the ears, and water was poured from the spigot in the chest, likely a rare surviving original element." Aquamaniles often held water needed for hand washing in Catholic masses and in upper-crust meals, and the water vessels often took human or animal form. Like the griffins that preceded it, this one sports a prominent beak and bird-foot forepaws.

Gold griffin belt buckle

Century: c. 6th-4th BC
Appears at: Plaque with Horned Lion-Griffins © The Metropolitan Museum of Art
From the Metropolitan Museum of Art: "In the 6th century BC, under the leadership of Cyrus the Great, the Persians established themselves at the head of an empire that would eventually extend from eastern Europe and Egypt to India. The Achaemenid Period is well documented by the descriptions of Greek and Old Testament writers and by abundant archaeological remains. Like the Achaemenid gold vessel decorated with the forepart of a lion also in the Museum's collection, this ornament depicts the winged lion-monster but here two creatures are shown rampant. In place of the lion's ears they have those of a bull. Horns curl back over spiky manes and the lion's neck is covered with a feather pattern. Sharply stylized wings extend over two of the five bosses and serve as decorative balance for the design. Heavy rings attached to the back suggest that the ornament was worn on a leather belt. the similar treatment of the lion motif on different types of objects demonstrates decorative conventions of the period."
Considering griffins reputedly guarded gold, it made sense to cast their likenesses in gold, too. Griffin bling for the brave warrior.

Year: 1898
Scientist: William Harlow Reed
Originally published in: New York Journal and Advertiser
Now appears in: Bone Wars by Tom Rea
The caption for the top image read, "How the Brontosaurus Giganteus Would Look If it Were Alive and Should Try to Peep into the Eleventh Story of the New York Life Building." The speck under the bottom dinosaur was intended to be a man, meaning this dinosaur's skull



Brontosaurus

would measure an unlikely 3 feet tall. This "Most Colossal Animal Ever on Earth Just Found Out West" was inspired by William Harlow Reed's find of a single sauropod femur. Expecting to find more of the animal, Reed returned to the site with other collectors, but after luckless prospecting, he had to admit that the femur was all there was. Reed was generally a talented collector, but he often raised false hopes about what he could find. He played cards with the University of Wyoming and the Carnegie Museum to see which institution would offer him higher pay. And while collecting fossils for O.C. Marsh, Reed had no qualms about smashing the bones he couldn't collect just to keep them from Cope's collectors.

Peeping dinosaur

Year: 1886
Scientist/artist: Camille Flammarion
Originally published in: Le Monde avant la création de l'homme
Now appears in: Monsters: A Bestiary of the Bizarre by Christopher Dell
Titled "A prehistoric monster in a modern town," this illustration features another gigantic reptilian voyeur. The horn on the snout suggests Iguanodon leanings but by the time this prehistoric monster leered through a high-rise window, Louis Dollo had already established that Iguanodon's horn was really a thumb spike. Given this beast's story-high head and front legs bending like human arms, however, realism probably wasn't the goal.
Larger image available

Megalosaurus and Iguanodon

Year: 1883
Scientist/artist: A. Demarly
Originally published in: La Création naturelle et les êtres vivants
Now appears in: The Reign of the Dinosaurs by Jean-Guy Michard
Another depiction of Iguanodon, also with a horn on its snout, shows the animal in a lizard-like pose. The same pose is applied to Megalosaurus. Because dinosaur skeletons were not fully understood, paleontologists of the time modeled the extinct reptiles after those still living.

Year: 1636
Scientist/artist: Antonio Tempesta
Originally published in: Collection of Quadrupeds
Now appears in: The Reign of the Dinosaurs by Jean-Guy Michard

Animals

These creatures look pretty odd today, but these depictions were much more plausible than what was commonly seen at the time. At least they're not fire-breathing dragons! The bottom illustration is of a crocodile.

Alligators

Year: c. 1791
Scientist/artist: William Bartram
Originally appeared in: Travels
Now appears in: Voyages of Discovery by Tony Rice © The Natural History Museum, London
Eighteenth-century naturalist Bartram wrote of Florida alligators: "They force the water out of their throat which falls from their mouth like a Cataract and a steam or vapour from their Nostrals like smoke." Bartram had a fascination not just for alligators, but also venomous snakes.

Pterosaurs

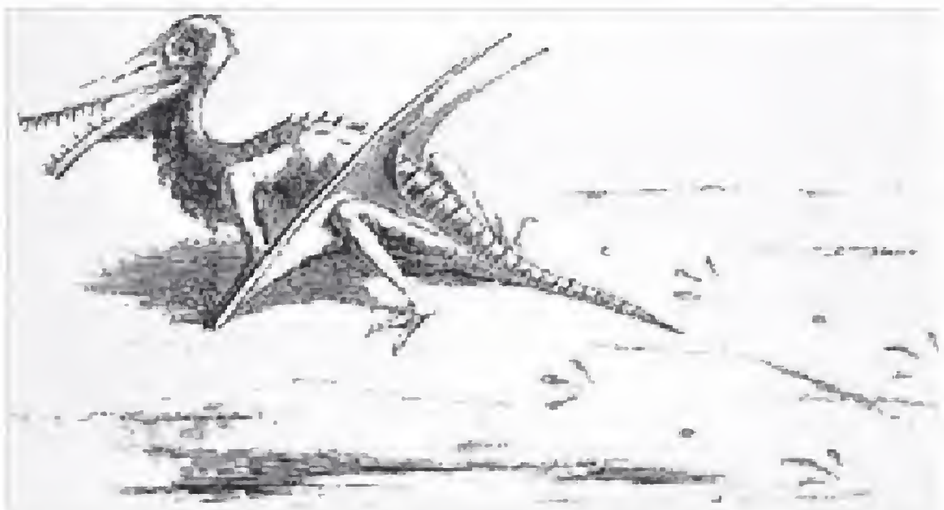
Year: 1843
Scientist/artist: E. Newman
Originally published in: "Note on the Pterodactyle Tribe Considered as Marsupial Bats" in The Zoologist
Now appears in: "The Case of the Bat-winged Pterosaur" by Kevin Padian in Dinosaurs Past and Present: Volume II
Pterosaurs were contemporaries of dinosaurs. They were not birds, bats or amphibians, but 19th-century artists depicted them as every one of those things. Although Georges Cuvier accurately identified pterosaurs as flying reptiles in 1812, his observations were largely ignored in favor of more fanciful restorations, such as this rat-eared, furry creature.
Larger image available

Pterosaurs with modern birds

Year: 1912
Scientist: Henry R. Knipe
Artist: Alice B. Woodward
Originally published in: Evolution in the Past
Image provided by: Biodiversity Heritage Library (some rights reserved)
Scientists have puzzled for decades over pterosaurian details such as locomotion on the ground and posture in flight, and not all these issues are necessarily settled now. This early-20th-century depiction might be off in a few details — the pterosaurs' trunks look a bit stout and their necks a bit short — but the general picture is right. But paired with the prehistoric pteranodons are some very modern-looking birds: a seagull standing by the shore and what might be a cockatoo in flight.

Pterosaur as a dragon

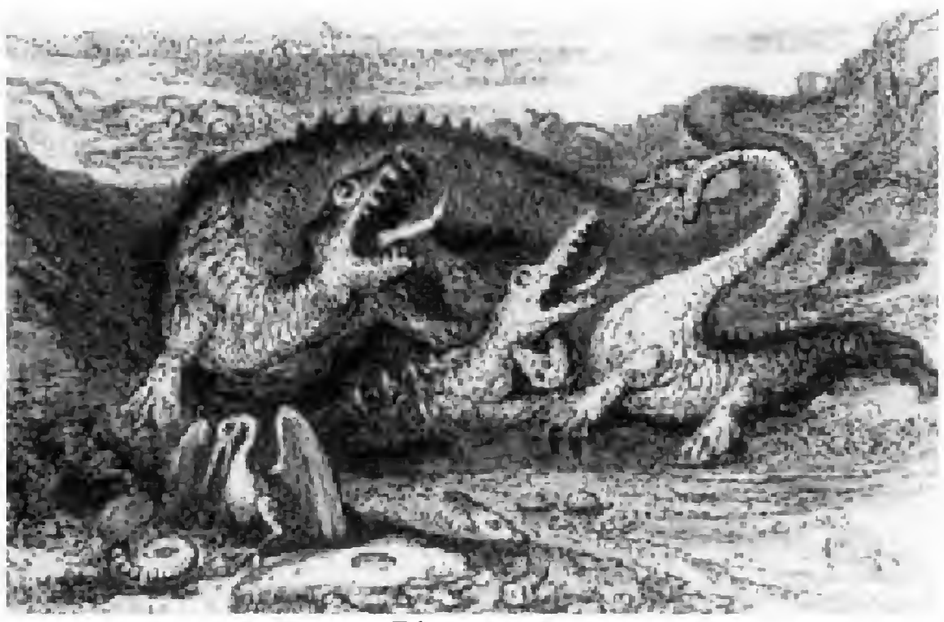
Year: 1829
Artist: George Howman
Originally appeared as: "Flying Dragon found at Lyme Regis, supposed to be noctivagous" (painting)
Now appears in: The Earth on Show by Ralph O'Connor
"Noctivagous" means wandering at night, and the Reverend Howman inscribed on the back of his nighttime painting that it was based on an account of a "flying dragon" fossil by William Buckland. Buckland's paper was about a pterodactyl fossil. Howman portrayed the pterosaur as a dragon, complete with a pointy tail, and put it into a present-day landscape, embellished with castle ruins and a listing ship. As flying reptiles, pterosaurs probably counted among the most puzzling fossils encountered by scientists in the early 19th century. At the same time scientists struggled to understand pterosaur appearance and behavior, artists such as Howman struggled to depict the animals in life. Howman erred on the side of dragons and time travel.



Pterosaur dragging its tail

Year: 1863
Artist: Édouard Riou, Louis Figuier
Originally published in: Earth Before the Deluge
Now appears in: "A Short History of Pterosaur Research" by Peter Wellnhofer in Zitteliana
Paleontologist Peter Wellnhofer points out that, at the beginning of the 19th century, few fossil reptiles had been found, so naturalists had to reconstruct ancient animals based on sparse information. Aside from all the other vexing problems about pterosaurs (Were they bats, birds, or reptiles? And how did they get off the ground?) there was the question of how they moved around while still on the ground. In his book about the history of life, Figuier reproduced Riou's reconstruction of pterosaur terrestrial locomotion. Riou believed he had found the evidence of how long-tailed pterosaurs moved — on all fours, tails dragging behind them — in tracks preserved in the Solnhofen limestone. It wasn't a bad approach; paleontologists often find clues to animal movement preserved in tracks, but Riou was wrong about the kind of animal that left those tracks. The tail dragging was really the work of horseshoe crabs. Some horseshoe crabs had the good manners to clarify their identities by simply dying at the ends of their tracks, and such "death march" fossils left little doubt. The identity of the track maker was only settled in about 1940, and just how pterosaurs move on the ground remained a topic of debate throughout the 20th century. Newer evidence indicates that Riou was at least correct about their quadrupedal gait.

Year: 1842
Scientist: George Richardson
Artist: John Martin
Originally published in: Geology for Beginners



Dinosaurs

Now appears in: Scenes from Deep Time: Early Pictorial Representations of the Prehistoric World by Martin J.S. Rudwick
According to 19th-century artist John Martin, dinosaurs spent much of their lives engaged in belching contests. Martin, an exceptionally talented artist whose paintings on biblical and classical subjects include The Fall of Babylon, Belshazzar's Feast and Deluge, later turned his efforts to scientific subjects. Unfortunately, he never let the facts get in the way of a good picture. Martin's contemporaries certainly lacked his sense of drama. Then again, he lacked their sense of accuracy.
Larger image available

Sea-dragons

Year: 1840
Scientist: Thomas Hawkins
Artist: John Martin
Originally published in: The Book of the Great Sea-Dragons
Now available via: The Online Books Page (http://onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu/webbin/book/lookupid?key=olbp19013)
The collaboration of artist John Martin with paleontologist Thomas Hawkins was a match made not in heaven but perhaps in the antediluvian inferno that Hawkins believed once dominated the globe. Contemporaries of dinosaurs, plesiosaurs and ichthyosaurs were giant sea-dragons in his opinion, and his collaborator Martin accommodated that vision perfectly. The sea-dragons weren't just big, strong and hungry, Hawkins argued, they were evil. After describing one fossil, Hawkins explained to his readers the work of paleontologists: "By such inductions we revive the habits of Creatures long vanished away, and recolor the ardent Monster fleeting through the expanse of Seas like lightning to his distant prey, with a lust quenchable alone in gore." The sea-dragons aren't alone in this scene; vicious pterosaurs lurk about, one of them pecking at a dead animal's eye. Hawkins's eccentric take on the ancient earth didn't end with mean monsters. He was also confident that the planet was bathed in darkness. He doubted the sun even existed the days of his sea-dragons, and if it did, its light couldn't penetrate our planet's murky atmosphere. Dark days indeed.
Larger image available

Year: 1837-1838
Scientist: Gideon Mantell
Artist: John Martin
Originally published in: The Wonders of Geology

Prehistoric scene

Now appears in: The Google Cultural Institute

(http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:John_Martin_-_The_country_of_the_Iguanodon_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg). Also discussed in Gideon Mantell and the Discovery of the Dinosaurs by Dennis R. Dean

Martin's painting of this scene has not survived, but this watercolor and subsequent engravings have. The engraving of Martin's work served as the frontispiece of Mantell's book — written in a less dramatic tone than Thomas Hawkins's apocalyptic tome on "sea-dragons." Mantell's caption text varied a bit in different editions, but explained the general scene: "The greater reptiles are the Iguanodon, Hylaeosaurus, Megalosaurus, and the Crocodile. An Iguanodon attacked by a Megalosaurus and Crocodile constitute the principal group; in the middle distance an Iguanodon and Hylaeosaurus are preparing for an encounter; a solitary Pterodactyl, or flying reptile, with its wings partly expanded, forms a conspicuous object in the foreground while tortoises are seen crawling on the banks of the river. Ammonites and other shells of the Portland Oolite, which is the foundation rock of the country, are strewn on the shore." Iguanodon and Hylaeosaurus weren't Mantell's only fossil discoveries to figure in this scene. At Tilgate Quarry, Mantell had discovered plant fossils, including ferns and conifers. The dinosaurs in this image, though, bear the dueling-dragon look typical of Martin's other pictures.

Larger image available

Fighting Iguanodons

Year: 1851

Scientist: Franz Unger

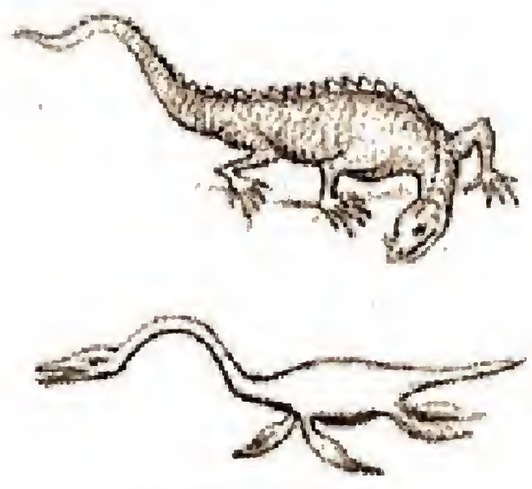
Artist: Josef Kuwasseg

Originally published in: The Primitive World in Its Different Period of Formation

Now appears in: Scenes from Deep Time: Early Pictorial Representations of the Prehistoric World by Martin J.S. Rudwick

This image shows a lush Cretaceous landscape, and provides another example of Gideon Mantell's iguanodons — again looking like giant lizards, again with their horns misplaced — but likely showing an event that must have happened: boys fighting over a girl.

Larger image available



Ancient reptiles

Year: 1837
Scientist/artist: William Buckland
Originally published in: Geology and Minerology Considered with Reference to Natural Theology
Now appears in: Making Modern Science by Bowler and Morus
Part of the Bridgewater Treatise project, Buckland's book was aimed at reconciling the newest discoveries in geology with religion. In fact, these winsome creatures were part of a larger diagram placing fossil organisms in their geologic context, and not a bad job for the time, except that they look a bit like dragons.
Expanded image available

Hadrosaur

Year: 1868
Scientists: Joseph Leidy and E.D. Cope
Artist: Benjamin Waterhouse Hawkins
Originally appeared in: Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia
Now appears in: Joseph Leidy: The Last Man Who Knew Everything by Leonard Warren
Dinosaurs didn't generally need to hang onto trees for support, but in all fairness, this was a pretty good articulation — and the first relatively complete dinosaur skeleton known to science. (Unfortunately, the skull was missing. Hawkins, pictured standing under the skeleton, mocked up a giant iguana skull, and painted it green for this display.) Although the formidable comparative anatomist Sir Richard Owen maintained that dinosaurs walked on all fours, Joseph Leidy realized that the small size of the hadrosaur's forelimbs suggested that it was bipedal. This articulation, now widely accepted, lent credence to T.H. Huxley's theory that birds evolved from dinosaurs.

Dinosaurs

Year: 1877
Artist: Benjamin Waterhouse Hawkins
Originally appeared in: Museum of Natural History, Princeton University
Now appears in: Dinosaurs Past and Present: Volume I, All in the Bones by Bramwell and Peck, and the Princeton University Art Museum
Princeton University invited Waterhouse Hawkins to paint a series of mural-size paintings of ancient life in the 1870s. Though paleontologists had given up the image of dinosaurs as oversized lizards decades earlier, he sometimes persisted in depicting them as such. These lizard-like creatures figured into his depiction of Jurassic life.

Year: 1877
Artist: Benjamin Waterhouse Hawkins
Originally appeared in: Museum of Natural History, Princeton University
Now appears in: All in the Bones by Bramwell and Peck
Having worked with the paleontologist Joseph Leidy to reconstruct the most complete Hadrosaurus foulkii specimen yet found, Waterhouse Hawkins ranked among the most

the rear. It's a bit like getting mooned by a giant lizard. This posterior view was a particular favorite of Victorian cartoonists working for Punch, which was perhaps the Victorian equivalent of The Onion. Sir Owen would not have been amused.
Larger image available

Pterosaurs

Year: 1853
Scientist: Sir Richard Owen
Artist: Benjamin Waterhouse Hawkins (engraving of reconstructions)
Originally appeared in: Crystal Palace Park, London
Now appears in: Scenes from Deep Time: Early Pictorial Representations of the Prehistoric World by Martin J.S. Rudwick
This is a close-up view of the pterodactyles in the previous picture. After the Crystal Palace project ground to a halt, due partly to a lack of funds, Hawkins began selling lithographs of his reconstructions. He also started the lecture circuit. One of his favorite themes was the resemblance he saw between pterosaurs and legendary dragons.

Pterosaurs

Year: 1853
Scientist: Sir Richard Owen
Artist: Benjamin Waterhouse Hawkins (engraving of reconstructions)
Originally appeared in: Crystal Palace Park, London
Photographed in: Crystal Palace Park by Alex J. White (some rights reserved)
Pterosaurs lurk among the suite of stony ruling reptiles at Crystal Palace Park, and the pterosaurs look like dragons. In fact there is plenty to admire, or at least understand, in this reconstruction. Paleontologists debated pterosaur posture and locomotion on the ground for many years after Owen and Hawkins produced these sculptures, and the scaly necks reflect the understanding that the animals were indeed reptiles. More recent finds indicate that, although pterosaurs had scales, they were confined to the feet and maybe the legs. The dragon-like necks might owe their existence to artistic license.

Year: 1854
Scientist: Sir Richard Owen
Artist: Benjamin Waterhouse Hawkins (engraving of reconstructions)
Originally appeared in: "Diagram of the Geological Restorations at the Crystal Palace"
Now appears in: Scenes from Deep Time: Early Pictorial Representations of the Prehistoric World by Martin J.S. Rudwick

Cretaceous life

knowledgeable on the dinosaur's shape and posture. But although their reconstruction was far more accurate that other saurian reconstruction attempts — including Waterhouse Hawkins's own work at Crystal Palace Park in the 1850s — scientific understanding of the animal's posture was still being refined, and its skull was still based on that of a modern-day iguana's. Marching single-file to the shore, the hadrosaurs in this image look a bit like actors in lizard-man costumes in a low-budget sci-fi thriller. The poor things are fleeing an attack from a pack of Laelaps (Dryptosaurus) dinosaurs. The painting suggests that the hadrosaurs may not be any safer in the water, which teems with monstrous ichthyosaurs and sinister, snake-necked plesiosaurs.
Expanded image available

Dinosaurs

Year: 1868
Artist: Benjamin Waterhouse Hawkins
Originally prepared for: American Museum of Natural History
Now appears in: American Monster by Paul Semonin
This sketch, from the library of the American Museum of Natural History in New York, shows Benjamin Waterhouse Hawkins's proposal for a prehistoric hall. (Note the tiny visitors in the lower right corner.) The dragon-like dinosaurs look like they're up to no good.

Footprint

Year: 1836
Scientist: Edward Hitchcock
Originally published in: "Ornithichnology: Description of the Foot Marks of Birds (Ornithichnites) on New Red Sandstone in Massachusetts" in American Journal of Science and the Fine Arts
Now appears in: The Dinosaur Papers edited by Weishampel and White
Edward Hitchcock was a professor of geology and theology, and the president of Amherst College, as well as an enthusiastic collector of the tracks left behind by giant Biblical birds. At least he thought they were birds. Hitchcock actually produced beautifully engraved but wrongly identified dinosaur tracks.
Larger image available

Year: 1617

Salamander in Fire

Scientist/artist: Michael Maier
Originally published in: Atlanta Fugiens
Now appears in: The Body of the Artisan by Pamela H. Smith
This picture of a salamander in fire reflected the common belief that the animals were unharmed by fire, or could be reborn within it.

Grand Lezard

Year: c. 1720
Scientist/artist: Henri Abraham Chatelain
Originally published in: Decorative Images of People and Animals, with a Map of Southern Africa
This picture shows a "Grand Lezard du Cap" from southern Africa. Although fanciful, this frilly, tense creature is not too far-fetched. Other animals pictured in Chatelain's map looked like real animals, including zebras, a rhino, and a chameleon.

Man slaying dragon

Year: 1497
Originally published in: Hortus Sanitatis
Now appears in: Mysteries of the Middle Ages by Thomas Cahill and The Birth and Development of the Geological Sciences by Frank Dawson Adams
Among the objects believed to cure disease were "stones" from the bodies of animals, including draconites, taken from the head of a dragon. Hortus Sanitatis, which listed the valued stones, included this woodcut of a man slaying a diminutive beast. One might expect that draconites, coming from an animal that didn't actually exist, would be prized more than something from an animal as pedestrian as a mountain goat, but mountain goats won.

Stork eating a snake

Year: 1593
Scientist/artist: Adam Lonitzer
Originally published in: Herbal
Now appears in: "Wonderful Secrets of Nature" by Kathleen Crowther-Heyck in Isis June 2003 issue
Both arguably very distant relatives of dinosaurs, storks and snakes featured in Renaissance and Reformation literature that combined a little observation with heavy doses of moralizing. Lonitzer's book pointed out the multifaceted utility of these birds. For one, storks would toss a baby bird out of the nest once a year "so that the masters of the place under which they nest and breed may have the

feathers as a tribute and tax, or as a tithe." Even better, storks hated snakes, and therefore kept them away from us. As if snakes weren't loathsome enough already, this little snake sported a crest on its head, reminiscent of the proud peacock. Nobody should forget, Lonitzer's readers knew, who tempted Eve into eating that apple.

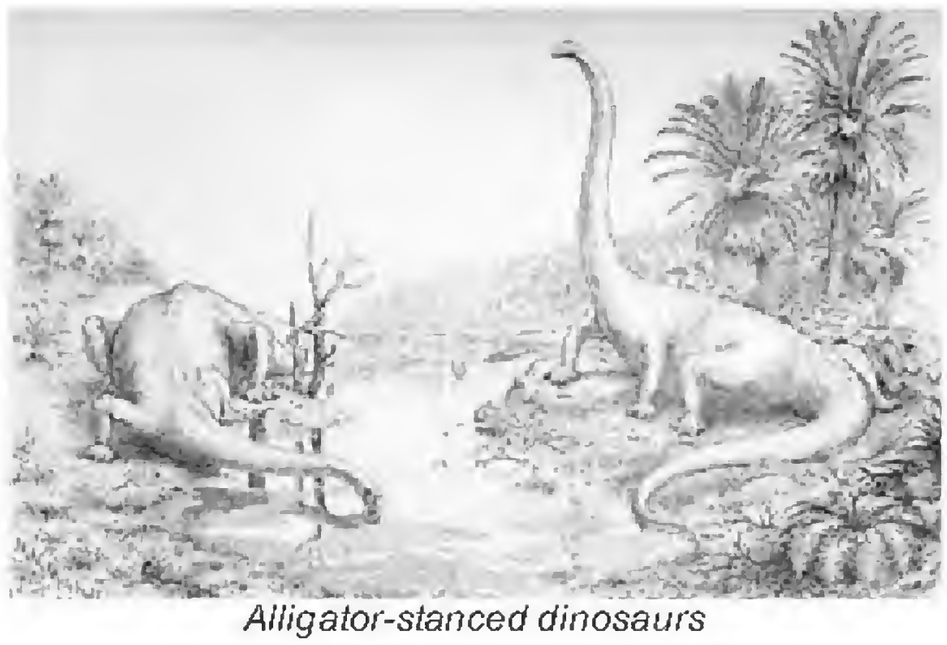
Narrative text and graphic design © by Michon Scott - Updated December 22, 2014

Diagram for Crystal Palace Park

Waterhouse Hawkins drew this diagram for a lecture he delivered to the Society of Arts in London, and the picture mapped the planned placement of the ancient reptiles in Crystal Palace Park. The animals were arranged in chronological order — oldest to newest shown from right to left — matched with the rock layers in which their fossils had been found: New Red Sandstone (associated with the Triassic), and Lias and Oolite (associated with the Jurassic).

Invitation

Year: 1854
Scientist: Sir Richard Owen
Artist: Benjamin Waterhouse Hawkins
Now appears in: Darwin's Universe: Evolution from A to Z by Richard Milner
Perhaps the best 1853 New Year's Eve party anywhere was the one inside the belly of an Iguanodon. Before the sculpture was unveiled at Crystal Palace Park, it served as the dining room for the Victorian Era's in-crowd geologists. An accurately reconstructed Iguanodon would offer nowhere near enough room for so many esteemed guests, but wholly accurate models were still a ways off in 1853, and Hawkins's handmade invitations, with time and place details inscribed on an outstretched pterosaur wing, are irresistible even today.


Alligator-stanced dinosaurs

Year: 1910
Scientist: Oliver P. Hay
Artist: Mary Mason Mitchell
Originally published in: "On the Manner of Locomotion of the Dinosaurs, Especially Diplodocus, with Remarks on the Origin of the Birds" in Proceedings of the Washington Academy of Sciences
Now appears in: Internet Archive (http://www.archive.org)
Richard Owen, perhaps for theological reasons, insisted upon a mammalian articulation in dinosaur reconstructions but, decades later, Hay argued that dinosaurs had alligator-like stances and drooping abdomens. One might wonder why dragging bellies wouldn't show up in fossil trackways but, in all fairness, the same question could be asked about dragging tails, which remained a standard part of dinosaur depictions throughout much of the 20th century.

Year: 1910
Scientist: H.N. Hutchinson
Artist: J. Smit
Originally published in: Extinct Monsters and Creatures of Other Days
Image provided by: Biodiversity Heritage Library (some rights reserved)
These cheerful specimens of Diplodocus carnegii enjoy a summertime dip the same way little kids today would, one of them apparently testing the water as the other looks on. Wallowing

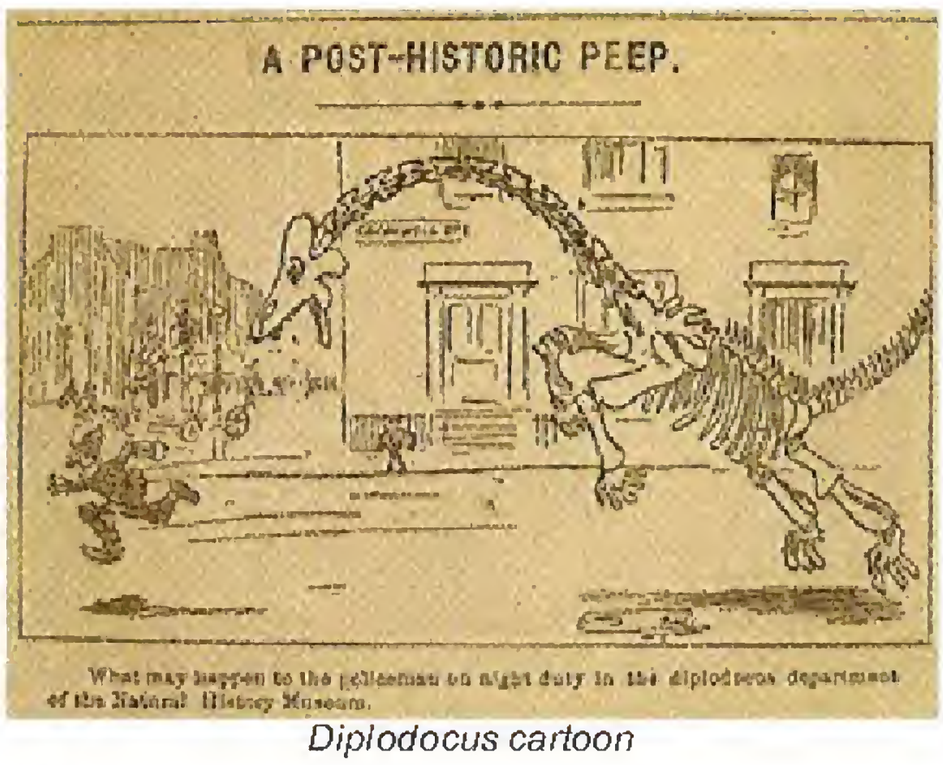
Wallowing dinosaurs

in the water wasn't a matter of sauropod recreation so much as necessity, paleontologists thought, believing that the animals needed the water's buoyancy to support their massive bodies. But water not only provides buoyancy, it also exerts pressure, and so much pressure in fact would have been too much for a dinosaur thorax. That discovery didn't occur for decades after this picture was published, and water-dwelling dinosaur persisted throughout much of the 20th century. So did dragging tails.

Diplodocus sketch

Year: 1905
Scientist: John Bell Hatcher
Artist: Alice Woodwards
Originally published in: The Weekly Graphic
Now appears at: Independence Day Fossil: Dippy the Star-Spangled Dinosaur

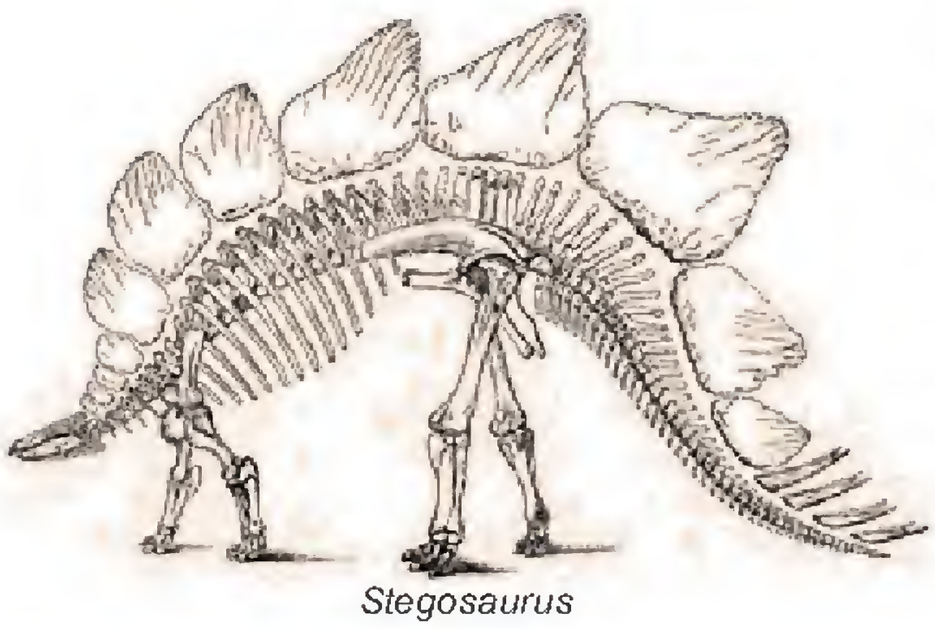
(http://www.theguardian.com/science/blog/2013/jul/04/independence-day-dippy-star-spangled-dinosaur) (Also discussed in Dippy by Barrett, Parry and Chapman)
Early articulations of Diplodocus portrayed the animal alternately as a lawnmower and a reptilian version of a hippo, frequently wallowing in the water. This early sketch of the dinosaur shows it near what appears to be a mudflat. Later sauropod articulations raised the heads, and even later ones raised the tails after paleontologists realized that few signs of tail dragging appeared in dinosaur tracks. As for sauropods spending most of their time in the water, Diplodocus skulls gave scientists a good reason to think the animals might have done that. Diplodocus nostrils sit so high on the skull they are in between the animal's eyes.



Diplodocus cartoon

Year: 1905
Originally published in: The Star
Now appears in: Dippy by Barrett, Parry and Chapman
At the beginning of the 20th century, Andrew Carnegie was dividing his time between the United States and Scotland, and spending his vast fortune on philanthropic projects. He wasted no time acquiring a Diplodocus skeleton for the Carnegie Museum in Pittsburgh. After John Bell Hatcher completed a meticulous study of the animal, Carnegie posted a picture of the skeleton in his study at Skibo Castle in Scotland. When King Edward VII visited in 1902, he reportedly asked that a similar dinosaur be put on display at the natural history branch of the British Museum (now the Natural History Museum,

London). Carnegie passed the request back to his people in Pittsburgh, initially making the fairly unrealistic request that somebody go dig up another Diplodocus skeleton. His underlings explained to him that wouldn't be so easily done, but instead offered a faithful cast of the fossil. Carnegie and the King agreed, and the cast was unveiled to the public in 1905. Interestingly, the cast went on display in London two years before the actual fossil went on display in Pittsburgh. That's because casts — while mimicking the exact shape and size of the fossils they're based on — offer two advantages: They're lightweight and they're less fragile. The Carnegie Museum staff took two extra years to figure out how to mount the original fossils, which had turned from bone into very heavy stone. In London, huge crowds turned out to see the skeleton that would be nicknamed Dippy, and cartoonists took advantage of the situation. In this cartoon, published in May 1905, the caption read, "What may happen to the policeman on night duty in the diplodocus department of the Natural History Museum." Sort of the Edwardian version of Night at the Museum. But it was silly to speculate that this dinosaur would come to life and try to munch on the night guard. Dippy was an herbivore.



Stegosaurus

Year: 1891
Scientist: O.C. Marsh
Originally published in: "Restoration of Stegosaurus" in American Journal of Science
Now appears in: The Dinosaur Papers edited by Weishampel and White
In 1891, Marsh published reconstructions of Brontosaurus (now known as Apatosaurus), Triceratops, and Stegosaurus — genera that still count among the best-known dinosaurs today. (He would also reprint the reconstructions in book form several years later.) Compared to paleontologists' current understanding of Stegosaurus, the flaws in Marsh's 1891 reconstruction are subtle, such as a dragging tail, and plates lined up in a single row. Today, the general consensus is that the plates were situated in two alternating rows, but even now, paleontologists aren't sure of the plates' function. They might have helped regulate temperature, made Stegosaurus look bigger (and therefore like more trouble to potential predators), or perhaps attracted sweethearts. The 1891 reconstruction apparently did not reflect Marsh's first take on the dinosaur. He initially thought the stegosaur might be a big turtle-like animal with its plates lying flat and overlapping each other to cover its back. Marsh discarded that idea based on better evidence, but the shingle-plate Stegosaurus reconstruction lived on.
Larger image available

Year: 1914
Scientist: Charles Gilmore
Artist: Frank Bond
Originally published in: Osteology of the armored Dinosauria in the United States National Museum, with special reference to the genus Stegosaurus
Now appears in: Paper Dinosaurs from the Linda Hall Library
Whereas O.C. Marsh overturned his own first interpretation of Stegosaurus — armored with a

Stegosaurus

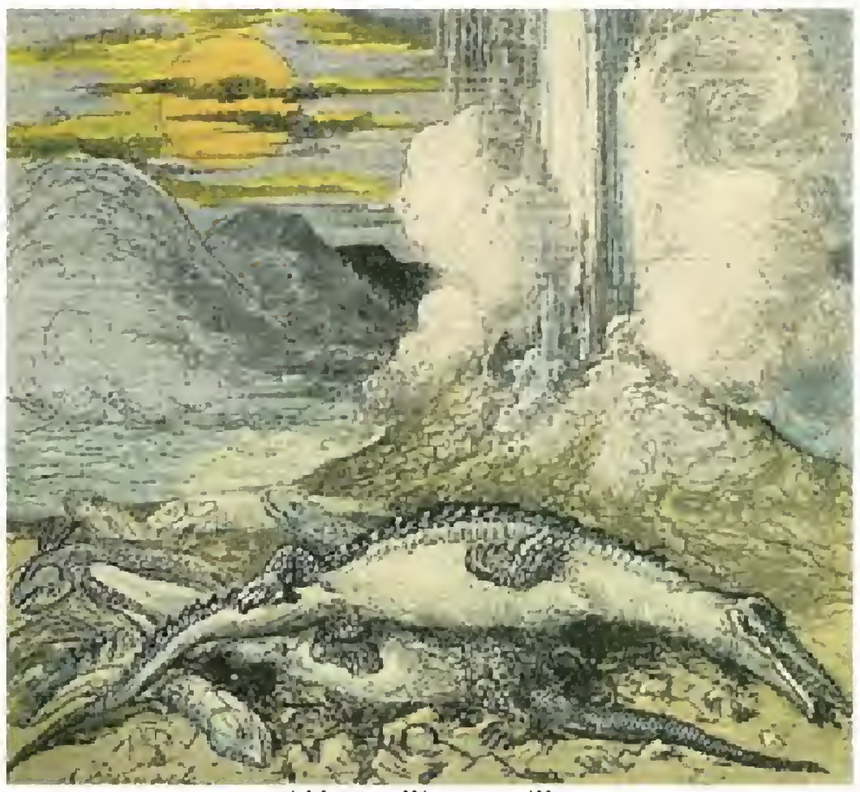
pavement of flat-lying protective plates — Charles Gilmore stuck with the idea, publishing on it years later. Gilmore's interpretation had an added twist: The spikes that are now understood to grace the dinosaur's tail instead sprouted from the stegosaur's back, in between the plates. Frank Bond's stegosaur looks like a big cactus with four legs and a mouth.

Worm-like reptile

Year: 1910

Scientist: H.N. Hutchinson
Originally published in: Extinct Monsters and Creatures of Other Days
Image provided by: Biodiversity Heritage Library (some rights reserved)
This illustration from the early 20th century shows amphibious and reptilian animals from what was known as the New Red Sandstone period. Named for red sandstone beds deposited in the United Kingdom, the time span included the Permian and Triassic Periods, roughly 290 to 205 million years ago. Perhaps the most eye-catching creature in this prehistoric tableau is the Hyperodapedon emerging from the shrubbery on the right. Its tube-like body looks like a scaled-down version of a giant Dune sandworm with almost ineffectual legs attached. More thorough reconstructions have since given the animal a different posture, in which its small tank-like torso is well off the ground. But the animal still looks pretty weird in modern reconstructions, and still sports the curved double fangs protruding from its upper jaw.

Year: 1883
Scientist/artist: Jean Rengade
Originally published in: La Création Naturelle et les Êtres Vivants
Now appears in: The Reign of the Dinosaurs by Jean-Guy Michard
This colored engraving shows a heap of ruling reptiles felled by the eruption of poisonous hot springs, although some of the reptiles shown here look more like big crocodiles than dinosaurs. Nineteenth-century geologists named geologic periods based largely on fossils. The disappearance of certain types of fossils (indicative of extinction) and their replacement by different organisms generally marked the end of one geologic period and the beginning of another. The geologist John Phillips named three major geological eras: Palæozoic ("old life" or "The Age of Fishes"), Mesozoic ("middle life" or "The Age of Reptiles") and Cænozoic ("new life" or "The Age of Mammals") in 1841. But even though geologists recognized that



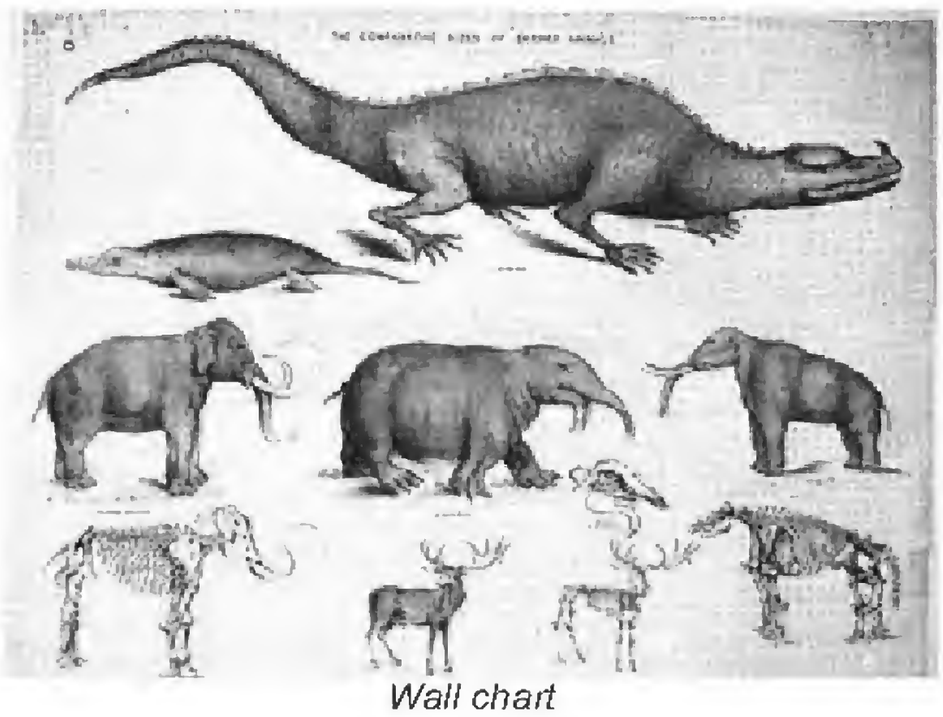
Worm-like reptile

Mesozoic reptiles went extinct, the naturalists couldn't be sure why, and proposed multiple explanations.

yyy

Year: 1833
Scientist: Gideon Mantell
Artist: George Scharf
Originally appeared as: "Reptiles restored, the remains of which are to be found in a fossil state in Tilgate Forest, Sussex" (painting)
Now appears in: The Dragon Seekers by Christopher McGowan and Gideon Mantell and the Discovery of Dinosaurs by Dennis R. Dean

Gideon Mantell rightly surmised that some strange fossil teeth he examined in the 1820s belonged to an herbivorous reptile. When he saw teeth from an iguana, he wrongly surmised that the ancient reptile was simply a giant version of the modern lizard. At the time of this depiction, Mantell had little reason to think otherwise, but he revised his Iguanodon reconstructions considerably years later, after finding more fossil evidence.



Wall chart

Year: c. 1835
Scientist: William Buckland
Artist: George Scharf
Originally appeared as: "The Comparative Sizes of Extinct Animals" (wall chart)
Now appears in: The Earth on Show by Ralph O'Connor

Iguanodon was the clear winner of the size contest in this wall chart used by William Buckland to teach his classes. Buckland adopted the same view as Mantell, who first discovered the Iguanodon tooth. Because the tooth looked like that of an iguana's, but was so much bigger, it wasn't entirely illogical to assume the ancient animal was a sized-up lizard. Early estimates of Iguanodon sized the animal at about 100 feet long. Not until more fossils turned up did the dinosaur get a new shape.
Expanded image available

Year: 1853
Scientist: John Mill
Originally published in: The Fossil Spirit: A Boy's Dream of Geology
Now appears in: The Earth on Show by Ralph O'Connor

These monstrous Iguanodon specimens are ready to rumble at sunset in the dramatic frontispiece of Mill's book. The animals look a bit more like

Iguanodons rumbling

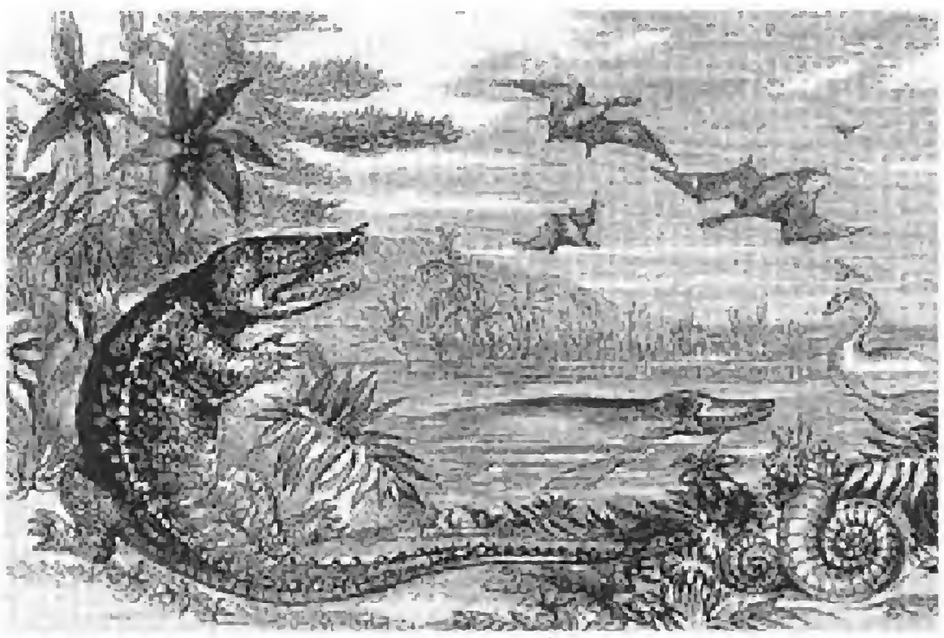
dragons than prehistoric reptiles, and they both sport the misplaced horns on their snouts. But if you were a boy (or a sensible girl) of the 19th century, you would likely enjoy Mill's book, though it might cost a couple days' worth of your dad's wages. Written for a young audience, the gift book neatly incorporated little outline drawings of fossils and fleshed-out extinct animals. Each chapter featured an initial capital letter made up of fossils and other objects.

Larger image available

Iguanodon

Year: 1910
Scientist: H.N. Hutchinson
Artist: J. Smit
Originally published in: Extinct Monsters and Creatures of Other Days
Image provided by: Biodiversity Heritage Library (some rights reserved)

Several decades after paleontologists imagined Iguanodon as a scaled-up lizard, or a dragon-like lizard, or a mammal-like quadruped (at least in posture), the animal got do-over. J. Smit's picture illustrates 19th-century advancements in piecing together the ancient reptile, including placement of the spike on its thumb instead of its snout. But this illustration shows a tripod-like posture — balancing on its hind legs and tail. Research in the century since this picture was published indicates that such a posture might have actually broken the ancient reptile's tail. As for the animal's color, a guess from 1910 is still about as good as a guess from today. Few skin samples from the Mesozoic survive.



Ruling reptiles

Year: 1855
Author: William Elfe Tayler
Originally published in: Geology: Its Facts and its Fictions
Now appears in: The Earth on Show by Ralph O'Connor

With titles to his credit such as Ashley Down; or, Living Faith in a Living God and Popery: Its Character and its Crimes, 19th-century writer W. Elfe Tayler was arguably more interested in the future inhabitants of heaven than the past inhabitants of earth. But he wrote about geology, too, namely to argue, "whilst the *facts* of the science are plain and incontrovertible, the *inferences* which our most celebrated Geologists have drawn from them, are, on the contrary, of the most questionable character — being not only founded on data altogether uncertain and insufficient, but actually at variance with many of the phenomena of the earth's surface, as described by themselves." In the preface of his so-called exposé of contemporary geologic theories, he vowed to "show their inconsistency both with reason and Scripture." In short, Tayler was a biblical literalist. But like geologists and paleontologists of his day, he still had to entice readers to buy his book, and as Ralph

Geology and paleontology have a lot in common: they complement each other, they concern themselves with vast expanses of time, and they're both relatively new disciplines. Geology not only helps us study the history of life on earth, it enables us to comprehend events beyond our control, such as earthquakes and volcanoes. Oddly enough, continental drift, the mechanism causing earthquakes and volcanoes, was not widely understood until the 1960s, even though Alfred Wegener described the process in 1912, and Abraham Ortelius suggested the possibility in the 16th century.

Seismometer

Now appears in: Rocks and Fossils by Busbey, Coenraads, Willis and Roots
Ever seen an ancient Chinese seismometer? That's what this is. Each tremor causes a ball to drop from the griffin's mouth into the frog's. Not exactly the accuracy of the USGS, but not a bad idea, either. Frequent, deadly earthquakes caused the Chinese to try detecting seismic activity starting in the second century AD.

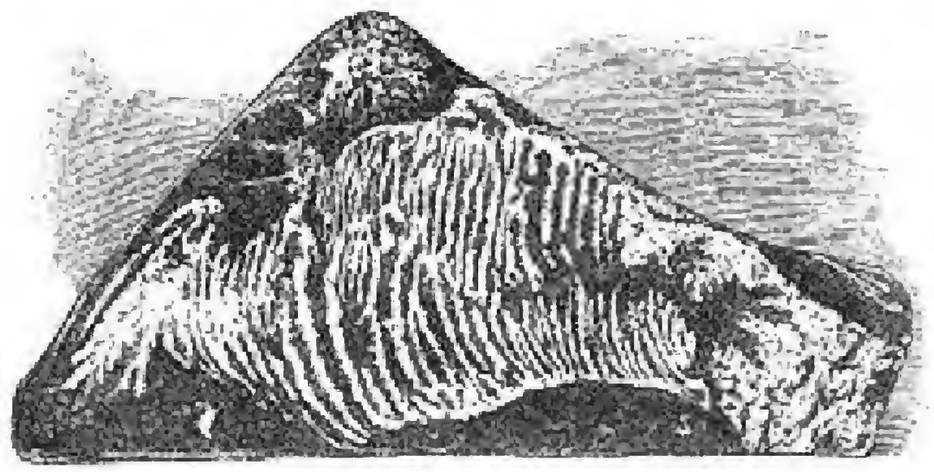
Engraving

Century: 16th
Scientist/artist: Marcantonio Raimondi
Name: Witches' Sabbath with Reconstructed Skeleton of Monster
Now appears in: Fossils: Evidence of Vanished Worlds by Yvette Gayrard-Valy
Europeans frequently portrayed fossilized creatures as instruments of the devil, along with goats, potions and witches. Fossils were said to have been "begotten by Satan to vie with God," a charge some biblical literalists still level today.

Year: 1485
Scientist: Barthélemy de Glanville
Originally published in: Le Livre des Propriétés des Choses
Now appears in: The Discovery of the Past by Alain Schnapp
An old saying in academic circles is: "Language affects perception." A good example is how differently the term "fossil" has been defined. Today, a fossil is defined as any evidence of ancient life, but centuries ago, a fossil was anything dug out of the ground, and that could be a crystal or a human artifact. No wonder scholars took so long to figure out what fossils really were. Evidence of this old confusion appears in this 15th-century woodcut. This prolific hillside gives rise both to vases and animals, all of them emerging from gaps in the ground.

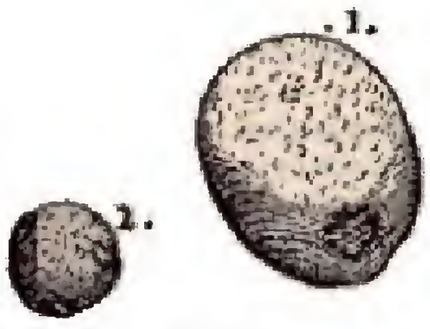
Trilobites

Year: 1857
Scientist/artist: Philip Henry Gosse
Originally published in: Omphalos
Now appears in: Glimpses of the Wonderful by Ann Thwaite
Compared to the previous example, there's nothing wrong with this depiction of trilobites. The 19th-century text surrounding this picture, however, was pretty weird. A devout Christian, Gosse struggled to reconcile his literal belief in the Bible with mounting evidence that, compared to humans, the earth was ancient. His solution was to coin the term Prochronism, which says life goes in a circle, and to create the earth and its inhabitants at any time, God apparently had little choice but to create "evidence" of an earlier existence. Such evidence included fossils like trilobites and even Adam's belly button. The title of the book, in fact, was Greek for "navel." Scientists ignored Gosse's hypothesis (with good reason as they had no way to test it). And although Gosse insisted God wasn't playing any tricks, many Christians thought that was the only logical conclusion they could take from his work, and they largely rejected it, too. Still, the argument that God uses fossils just to test believers' faith surfaces even today.



Eozoon

Year: 1870
Scientists: John William Dawson, Alexander Winchell
Published in: Sketches of Creation by Alexander Winchell (Also discussed in Cradle of Life by J. William Schopf)
In the late 1850s, a local collector brought some rock samples to William Logan, head of the Geological Survey of Canada. In 1864, Logan showed the specimens to Dawson, who concluded that they were fossils of foraminifera. Unlike modern foraminifera, which are tiny, multi-chambered shells, these forams were huge. Perhaps, their extreme size resulted from their extreme age; these fossils came from rocks estimated to be over a billion years old. Dawson dubbed them Eozoön Canadense, or "dawn animal of Canada." Eozoön enjoyed the status of oldest known organism for years, and Winchell highlighted it in his book about the history of life. There was just one problem. In 1894, J.W. Gregory and Hugh Johnston-Lavis found eerily similar samples of big, old foraminifera in limestone blocks spat out quite recently by Mount Vesuvius. Magma intruding into layers of limestone can deform the limestone and create convincing pseudofossils.
Larger image available



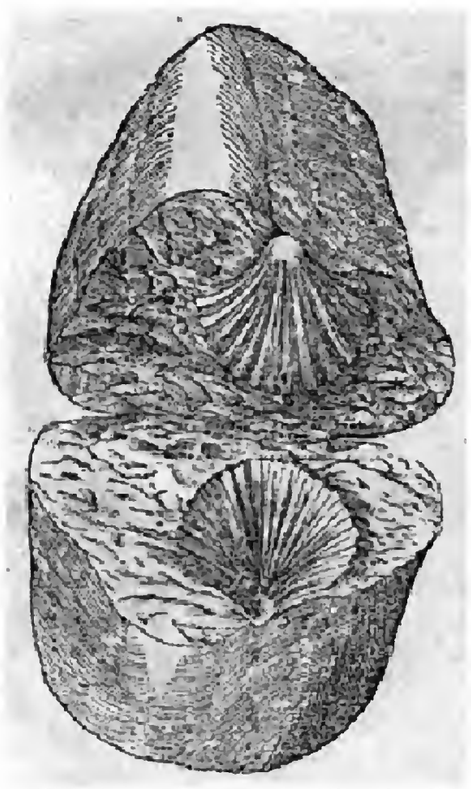
Rocks

Year: 1565
Scientist: Conrad Gesner
Originally published in: De Omni Rerum Fossilium
Now appears in: The Birth and Development of the Geological Sciences by Frank Dawson Adams
Did you know rocks could have babies? Well maybe not, but that's just what a lot of people used to think. When some rocks were broken, they

revealed smaller rocks inside, and some rocks were even rumored to spontaneously burst open, giving birth to little rocks. Where did people get these ideas? From rocks that are now called concretions. When layers of sediment cover an object and immediately harden, they form a tough nodule. (This often happens to fossils, and preserves them very well.) Sometimes, the inner layers of sediment in a concretion erode away, leaving the small core rattling around inside a tough outer layer. When the outer layer is broken open, it looks like the rock had a baby.

Pearl ring

Year: 1587 (Physiologus text), 250-400 (ring)
Text originally published in: Physiologus
Image appears at: Ring Digital image courtesy of the Getty's Open Content Program
Material discussed in: Physiologus translated by Michael Curley
Physiologus dates back to Antiquity, and some scholars think it might have originated in Egypt. Whatever its origins, this collection of legends about nature was appropriated in the Middle Ages to impart lessons in Christian morality, sometimes under the same title, sometimes in a bestiary. Advising readers on what leads to heaven or hell was the work's first goal; relaying remotely accurate information about nature was a distant second. In the chapter on the "oyster-stone," Physiologus read, "I will tell you how the pearl is born. There is a stone in the sea called the oyster. It comes out of the sea early in the morning ahead of the light, and, opening its shell (that is, its mouth), it swallows the heavenly dew and the rays of the sun and moon and the light from the stars above. And thus is born the pearl from the most high celestial bodies." Pearl formation would be understood much better around the turn of the 20th century when culturing became widespread, although the Chinese mastered making mabé pearl Buddhas as early as the sixth century AD.



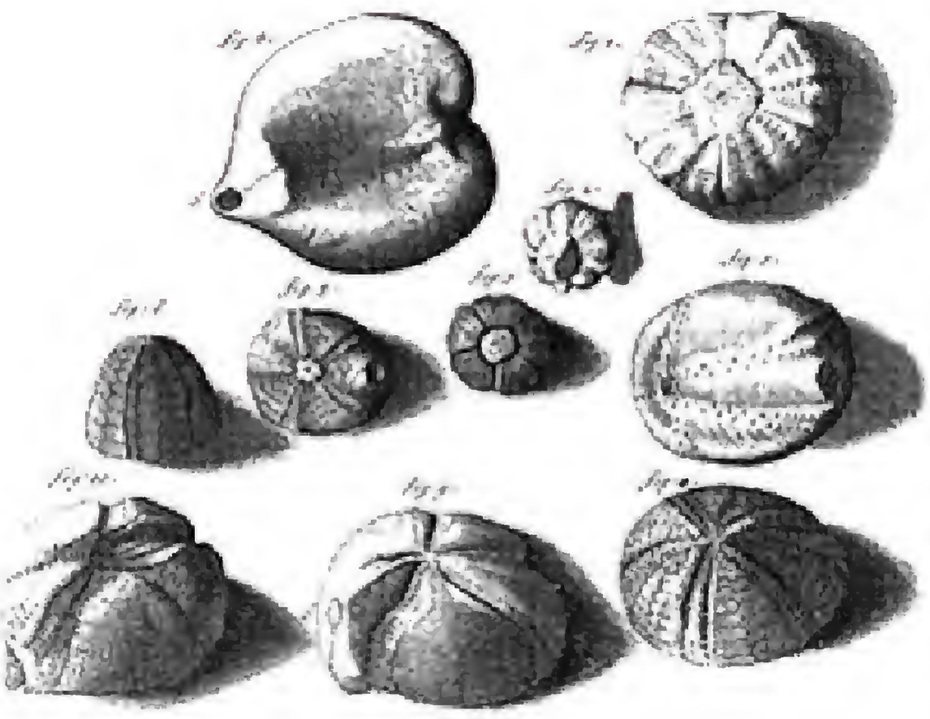
Rock pregnant with shell

Year: 1648
Scientist: Ulisse Aldrovandi
Originally published in: Musaeum Metallicum
Now appears in: "Ulisse Aldrovandi (1522-1605): The Study of Trace Fossils During the Renaissance" by Andrea Baucon in Ichnos, October 2009 issue
Renaissance naturalist Ulisse Aldrovandi took the concept of rocks ready to give birth even further than Gesner. This image depicts a "rock pregnant with a shell." Given the limited understanding of fossilization at the time, his suspicions were understandable. To his credit, Aldrovandi did discuss petrifaction when describing a mammoth tooth.

Year: 1565
Scientist: Conrad Gesner
Originally published in: De Omni Rerum Fossilium
Now appears in: The Birth and Development of the Geological Sciences by Frank Dawson Adams and The Star-Crossed Stone by Kenneth J. McNamara
In his book on fossils, Gesner outlined 15 different categories of fossils, everything from

Fossils

objects taking their names from heavenly bodies to objects resembling four-footed animals. In this illustration, the fossils on top looked to Gesner like serpent eggs, while the ones on the bottom resembled stars. In fact, both kinds were fossil echinoderms: marine invertebrates whose bodies are based on a five-fold plan. The top objects are fossil sea urchins, and the bottom objects are probably pieces of crinoid (sea lily) stems. Echinoderms have existed for hundreds of millions of years, and many species still live today. How many echinoderms Gesner saw in their original habitat is unknown, although he did identify a flint fossil as a petrified sea urchin. In other cases, he passed along folklore, still affected by a medieval world view.



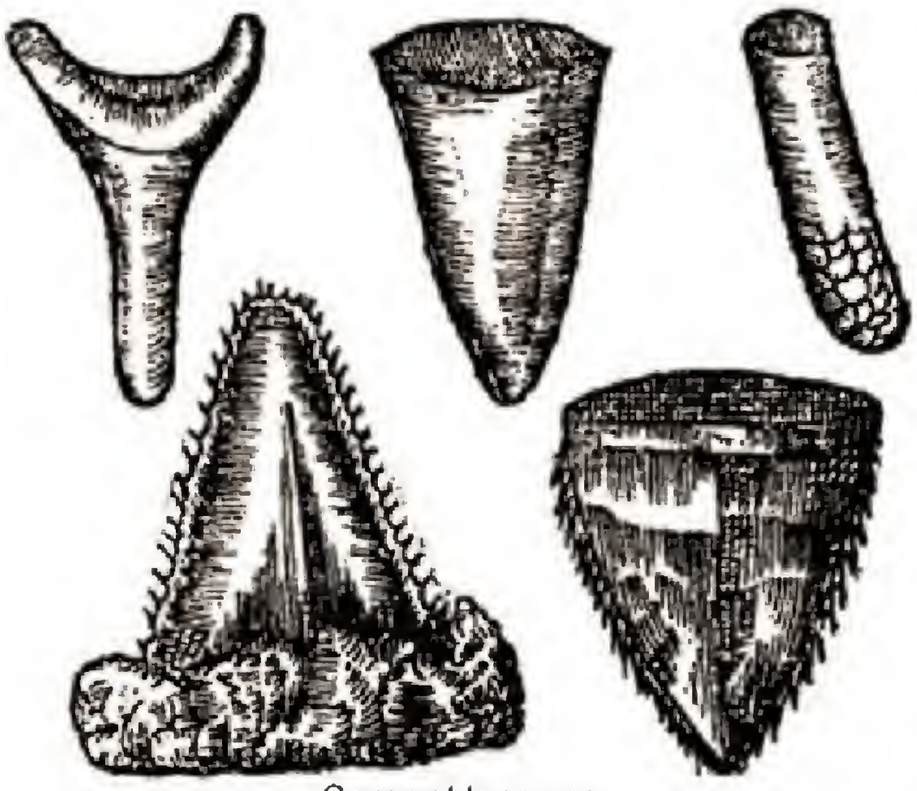
Fossils

Year: 1705
Scientist: Robert Hooke
Publisher: Richard Waller
Originally published in: The Posthumous Works of Robert Hooke
Now appears in: The Star-Crossed Stone by Kenneth J. McNamara
The 17th-century polymath Robert Hooke largely left behind the quaint beliefs surrounding fossil echinoderms. He originally illustrated these fossil sea urchins, which he described as "Button-stones" and "Helmet-stones," to accompany a lecture he delivered on earthquakes to the Royal Society in 1668. After he died, his friend Waller published the illustrations. Of the fossils, Hooke observed, "All these and most other kinds of stony bodies which are formed thus strangely figured, do owe their formation and figuration, not to any kind of *Plastick virtue* inherent in the earth, but to the shells of certain Shell-fishes, which, either by some Deluge, Inundation, Earthquake, or some such other means, came to be thrown to that place, and there to be fill'd with some kind of Mudd or Clay, or *petrifying* Water, or some other substance, which in tract of time has been settled together and hardened in those shelly moulds into those shaped substances we now find them." One of the first savants to seriously consider extinction, Hooke advanced our understanding of what fossils really were.
Larger image available

Shell and crystal

Year: 1598
Scientist/artist: Jean Bauhin
Originally published in: Treatise on German fountains at Boll
Now appears in: I Have Landed by Stephen Jay Gould
Today a fossil is identified as any evidence of ancient life. Centuries ago, fossils were identified as anything dug up from the ground, and savants frequently lumped items of organic and inorganic origins together. Here, Bauhin

depicted a snail shell and a crystal together because they had the same general shape. Savants often looked for objects resembling body parts, hoping those "fossils" could cure the ailing organs.



Serpent tongues

Year: 1655
Scientist/artist: Ole Worm
Originally published in: Museum Wormianum
Now appears in: A History of Geology and Medicine edited by Moody, Duffin and Gardner-Thorpe
The medicine cabinets of Europe's upper crust often included *glossopetrae*, or serpent tongues. Until they were properly identified as fossil shark teeth, the objects were not just believed to be serpent tongues turned to stone, they were also prized for their alleged curative powers. Glossopetrae could speed childbirth, protect against snakebite, warn their owners of the proximity of poison by sweating in its presence, cure sore mouths, and even guard against diseases caused by witchcraft. In this illustration, the tooth in the upper left corner, with its two-pronged root, especially resembles a forked snake tongue.

Figured stones

Year: 1708
Scientist: Carolus Nicolaus Langius
Originally published in: Historia Lapidum Figuratorum Helvetiae
Now appears in: The Birth and Development of the Geological Sciences by Frank Dawson Adams
What 18th-century scholars regarded as "figured stones" are today recognized as fossils. The circular and star-shaped objects at the top appear to come from crinoid (sea lily) stems. The figure near the bottom of the frame is probably a trilobite fossil.
Larger image available

Belemnites as stalactites

Year: 1598
Scientist/artist: Jean Bauhin
Originally published in: Treatise on German fountains at Boll
Now appears in: I Have Landed by Stephen Jay Gould
In another example of the confusion over the organic versus inorganic origin of fossils, Bauhin drew what looked like stalactites dangling from the ceiling of a cave. In fact, these fossils belonged to belemnites — shells of squidlike animals.

Ship sunk by lodestone

Year: 1497
Originally published in: Hortus Sanitatis
Now appears in: The Birth and Development of the Geological Sciences by Frank Dawson Adams
Even in the age of Pliny, savants recognized that some stones could attract iron, and further that some of these stones were bipolar, attracting iron on one side and repelling it on the other. Still, the power of these magnets (or lodestones, as they were called) was a tad overrated. Legends told of lodestone hills along the Indian coast so powerful that no ship held together by iron nails dared sail past. This picture shows the resulting tragedy as the nails fly to the hills and the passengers sink into the water.

Alchemist

Now appears in: Rocks and Fossils by Busbey, Coenraads, Willis and Roots
A commonly held belief during the Middle Ages and Renaissance was that lead could be turned to gold, as in this wishful depiction. Anti-alchemy laws forbidding transmutation of lesser metals into gold were not uncommon — not because the lawmakers thought transmutation would fail, but precisely because they thought it might succeed and undermine the economy. In his plan for the ideal alchemical factory, 17th-century polymath Johann Joachim Becher neatly divided up the tasks that different workers would do. Becher insisted that the laborers be illiterate, or at least denied access to pens and paper, and that laborers from different parts of the factory be forbidden to fraternize with each other and trade secrets. (In fact, 20th-century science does enable us to change lead to gold, but the energy requirements are so costly, it's easier to find gold the old-fashioned way.) Regardless of how alchemical gold might have changed commerce, debates raged about its usefulness in medicine; centuries ago, some people actually ingested gold in hopes of strengthening their hearts, but no one knew whether "alchemical" gold could have the same effect.

Alchemy symbols

Year: 1652
Scientist/artist: Elias Ashmole
Originally published in: Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum
Now appears in: Alchemy: The Great Secret by Andrea Aromatico
Chemistry has a forerunner that is centuries older, less accurate and much less straightforward. The mysterious set of practices known as alchemy might all owe their origins, at least in part, to ancient writings attributed to Hermes Trismegistus. The writings in question probably date from the first two centuries AD, but Renaissance believers thought Hermes might be a contemporary of Moses (if not the great prophet himself) and the deliverer of divine knowledge to mankind. One of Hermes's great

gifts was alchemy, the ability to transmute base metals into precious metals, but more importantly to attain spiritual insights embodied in the Philosopher's Stone. Medieval and Renaissance alchemists were expected to be two things at once: charitable and envious. They were to be charitable in sharing their knowledge with others for the betterment of the whole world. But they were also to be envious by safeguarding their esoteric wisdom from the vulgar masses who would misunderstand and possibly abuse it. As a result, alchemy books often communicated through the kind of symbolism that would be known as dog whistling today. The symbols included real and imaginary animals, monsters and heroes. This illustration, published in the 17th century, has been described as the bird of Hermes giving the alchemical dragon the celestial flux. And you thought your chemistry textbook was hard to decipher.

Larger image available

Alchemy vessels and symbols

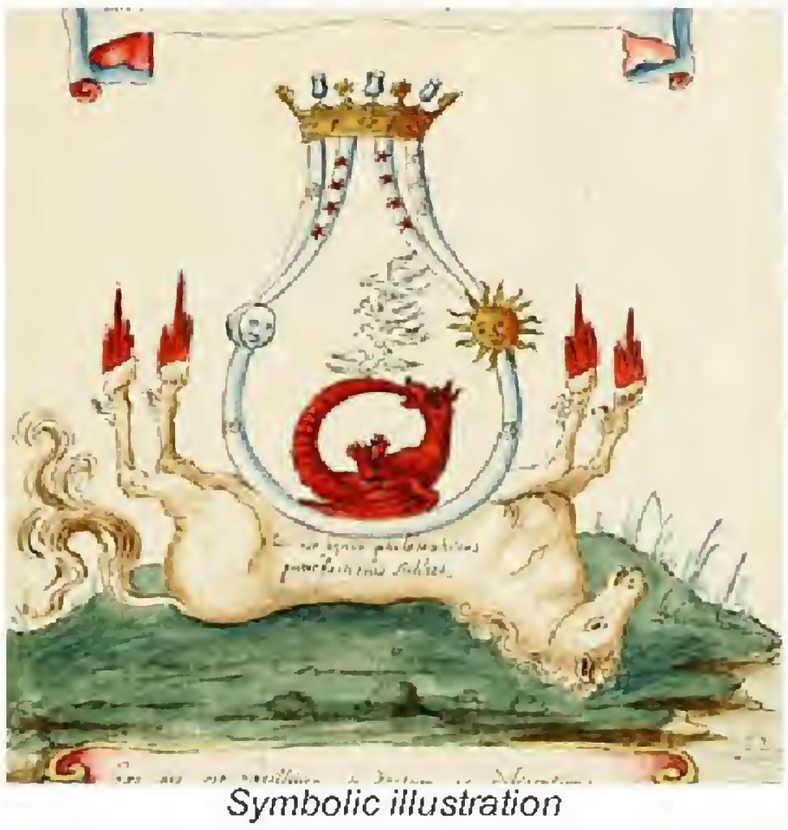
Year: 1609
Scientist/artist: Giambattista Della Porta
Originally published in: De Distillatione
Now appears in: Alchemy: The Great Secret by Andrea Aromatico

Precursors of chemists lived in a world riddled with secrecy, symbolism and celestial correspondences. For instance, during the Middle Ages and Renaissance, copper wasn't just copper, it was the earthly material like the planet Venus. And gold corresponded to the sun, silver to the moon, Jupiter to tin, and Saturn to lead. Mercury was the name of both the planet and the shimmering liquid we now know is toxic. As silly as the mystical associations seem today, many alchemists did make discoveries about the metals they studied for spiritual enlightenment. They also built lab equipment. These images show a few alchemical vessels, a couple of them with their corresponding symbols. The savant writing about them, Della Porta, would have known about the expected stages of transmutation from pedestrian to spiritual metal in an alchemist's lab: black (Nigredo), white (Albedo), yellow (Citrinitas) and finally red (Rubedo). The Latin term Rubedo experienced a new popularity when it was appropriated in the 21st century by Tiffany jewelers for a very pretty pink alloy, but the jeweler apparently also appropriated alchemy's affinity for secrecy regarding the alloy's actual gold content.

Larger image available

Year: c. 1700
Originally appeared in: The Vessels of Hermes
Now appears in: The Vessels of Hermes — an Alchemical Album in Public Domain Review

Manly Palmer Hall was an early-20th-century mystic who published The Secret Teachings of All Ages in the 1920s, and acquired some remarkably weird manuscripts in the 1930s. One gem he purchased, perhaps at a Sotheby's auction, was an alchemical album by an unknown author, composed at the dawn of the 18th century. The watercolors in this album included symbolic illustrations hard to interpret today: cherubs representing salt, sulfur and mercury bearing a giant egg, and an androgynous creature created by alchemical processes. This



Symbolic illustration

illustration has been described as "the sublimation by the eagles after putrefaction." The sun and moon both smile upon a dragon that eats its own tail while perched on the belly of an upside down horse. A stack of eagles alights on the dragon, and the upturned horse apparently shoots flames from its hooves. Besides such handy tricks as turning base metal into gold, alchemy promised to enable its adherents to find the kind of esoteric wisdom hinted at in this manuscript. Skepticism about alchemy had thrived for centuries — Persian polymath Avicenna (ibn Sina) and Jesuit polymath Athanasius Kircher both doubted alchemical claims — but the ranks of the firm believers included such luminaries as Isaac Newton.

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Distillation

Year: 1532
Scientist/artist: Hieronymus Brunschwig
Originally published in: Liber de Arte Distillandi
Now appears in: The Professor of Secrets by William Eamon
Although medieval and Renaissance alchemy often concerned itself with transmuting base metals into gold or achieving philosophical insights, other applications were considered more practical. This illustration shows alchemists in the process of distillation, a general process still in use today. These alchemists prepare distilled medicinal water. Though closer to the aims of modern chemistry than other facets of alchemy, some Renaissance distillation aims were a little overly ambitious. Though distillation, alchemists sought, in the words of science historian Bruce Moran, "a super-medicine, an elixir or *aqua vitae* that could purify physical bodies of their impurities, rid the human body of disease, and prolong life."
Larger image available

Fossil wood

Year: 1637
Scientist/artist: Francesco Stelluti
Originally published in: Trattato del Legno Fossile Minerale
Now appears in: Fossil Woods and Other Geological Specimens by Andrew C. Scott and David Freedberg
"From what I have been able to see and observe, the wood is not generated from the seed or root of any plant whatsoever, but only from a type of earth, containing much clay, which is slowly transformed into wood," Stelluti wrote. Stelluti was wrong, and for members of the meticulous Lincean Academy, such errors were rare. The mistake is forgivable, though, considering the fossil wood in question had no fossil leaves attached, and had been carried far away from its original locality.

Figured stone

Year: 1676
Scientist/artist: Robert Plot
Originally published in: The Natural History of Oxfordshire
Now appears in: The Dinosaur Papers edited by Weishampel and White
According to Robert Plot, every stone was designed by God for the edification or entertainment of humans, including this rock that looked like a funny face. Plot described this rock among other stones that looked like human eyes, human ears and human hearts.

Bufonite extraction

Year: 1497
Originally published in: Hortus Sanitatis
Now appears in: The Birth and Development of the Geological Sciences by Frank Dawson Adams
Just as humans can form "stones" in our gallbladders or kidneys, so can other animals. That much, medieval and Renaissance Europeans understood, though they seemed to think some stones came from different parts animals' bodies, such as the head of a frog. Here, a man extracts stones, called a bufonites, from the head of a frog who seems pretty good-natured about the whole process. Although you and I probably wouldn't want to handle these stony secretions (often called bezoar stones), they were once highly valued, some selling for 10 times their own weight in gold. Why? They were thought to be an antidote to all kinds of poison. In an age when the ranks of royalty were often dispatched with poison — sometimes by their own family members — antidotes were hot items.

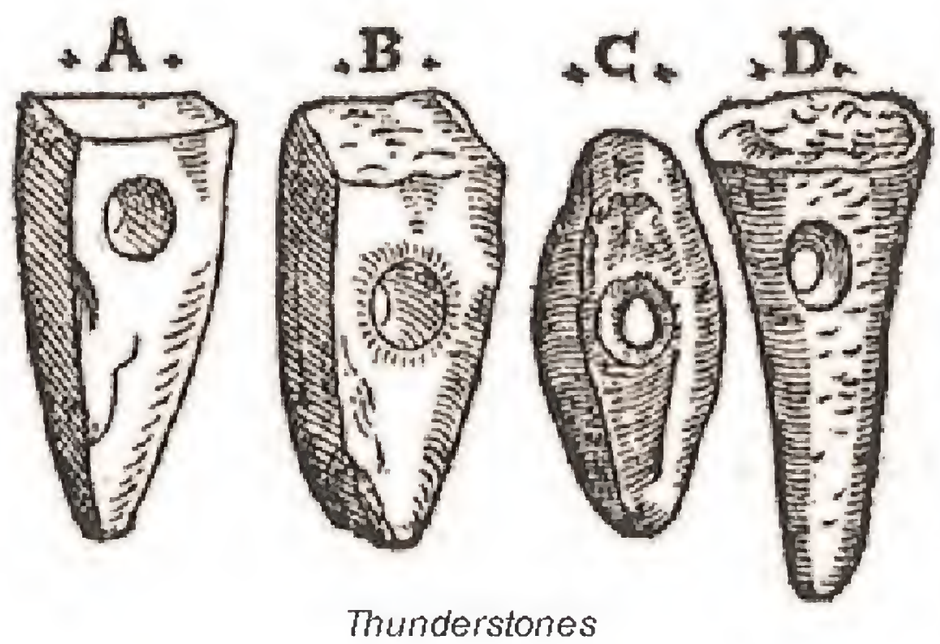
Frogs

Year: c. 1521
Originally published in: Noble Lyfe and Natures of Man of Bestes Serpentys Fowles and Fishes
Now appears in: "Fossils as Drugs" by Christopher Duffin in Ferrantia
Although some animals do produce stony secretions, the stones reputed to come from frog heads were as rare as they were valuable. The text with this frog woodcut extolled the virtues of the toad stone: "Borax is a maner of tode that hathe a stone in his hede, & whan this stone is goten out the whyie that the tode dothe love than hathe the stone in hymselfe a fygure of an iye, but if it be taken out whan the tode is ded than hathe the venym taken awaye that iye and enpayred the stone. This tode whan that is stered or meued than swelleth it of his owne venym or poyson." Advice on procuring toad stones warned that such an object had to be extracted from a living frog by grabbing the rock after the frog somehow ejected it, but before the animal could "sup it up again." To coax the toads to do the desired casting out, the amphibians had to be placed on a piece of red cloth. (As simple as it sounds, requiring red material would have stopped plenty of toad stone seekers in their tracks; dyes that could color cloth a bright, reliable red were rare and expensive before the invention of synthetic

dyes in the 19th century.) There was another reason that getting a rock out of a frog head would be pretty tough: The objects frequently identified as toad stones, or bufonites, were really fossil fish teeth, many from a species that lived during the Jurassic Period. Agostino Scilla, an early proponent of the modern definition of fossils — remains of ancient organisms — may have been the first person to correctly identify these objects.

Hematite cure

Year: 1483
Originally published in: Hortus Sanitatis
Now appears in: "Some Early Eighteenth Century Geological Material Medica" by Christopher J. Duffin in Geological Society, London, Special Publications
This woodcut shows the use of hematite in treating a nosebleed. The iron-rich ore was believed handy in treating the loss of blood from just about any human orifice. Considering iron figures into human blood as well as into hematite, perhaps the idea wasn't entirely misguided. And mere hematite was probably safer than some other wonder drugs of the time. Some concoctions involved bezoar stones — hardened concretions of undigested matter from the guts of various animals. When big, valuable bezoars were unavailable, savvy apothecaries developed pricey substitutes. Duffin recounts that one recipe mixed "small bezoars with comminuted precious stones (emerald, topaz, ruby, jacinth and sapphire), other geological materials (fossil shark's teeth, Terra Sigillata, stones from Cananor), semiprecious organic gems (pearl and coral), musk and ambergris, all bound together with hart's horn jelly. The hardened confections were covered with gold or silver leaf and given a high surface polish, emphasizing the high status and expensive nature of the bezoar substitute."



Thunderstones

Year: 1565
Scientist: Conrad Gesner
Originally published in: De Omni Rerum Fossilium
Now appears in: The Birth and Development of the Geological Sciences by Frank Dawson Adams
For many years, Europeans had been finding weird stones, often pointy, often with holes in them. Today, these stones are understood to be ancient artifacts, namely axes with holes drilled in them for handles. Centuries ago, they were thought to be created by lightning strikes. These thunderstones were carried around or kept in houses to ward off damage from electrical storms.

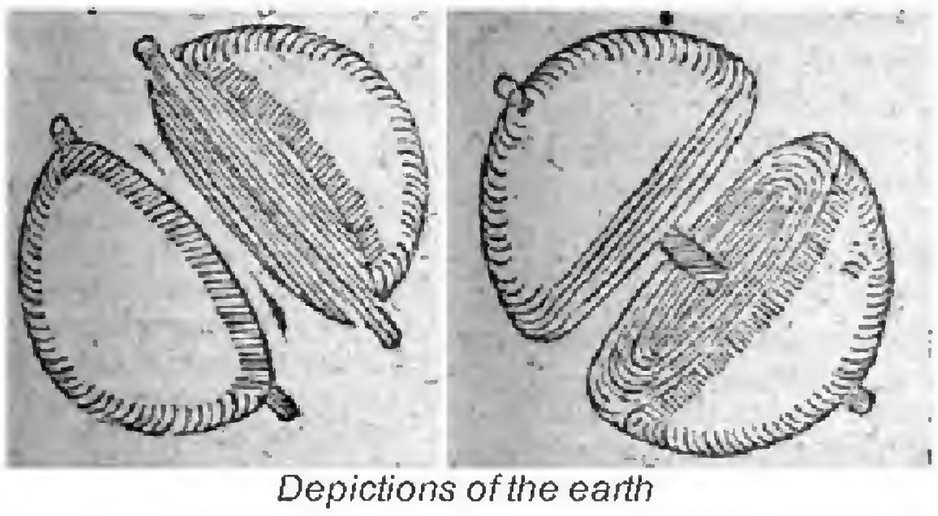
Year: 1704
Scientist: Michael Bernhard Valentini
Originally published in: Natur und Minerialien Kammer
Now appears in: "Fossils as Drugs" by Christopher Duffin in Ferrantia
Fossils have a long history of being used as medicine by people who didn't know their

Lyncurium

medicines were millions of years old. One interpretation of belemnites was that they were Lyncurium or Lapis Lincis — lynx urine turned to stone. The 17th-century naturalist Anselm Boëtius de Boodt argued that belemnites were coveted Lyncurium, in part because when burnt, they stank like cat urine. Naturalists, apothecaries and chronically sick people all coveted these stinky stones because they were believed to cure a long list of ailments.

Fingers of Ida

Year: 1749
Scientist: Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz
Originally published in: Protogaea
Now appears in: Protogaea by Leibniz
Belemnites are the internal skeletons of extinct cephalopods, and these fossils flummoxed naturalists for centuries. To his credit, Leibniz argued that these strange stones were likely leftovers from once-living animals, though he wasn't sure which ones. He referred to them as "Fingers of Ida." Leibniz had more confidence in identifying fossil shark teeth, having been influenced by the polymath Steno. Although Leibniz scoffed at some contemporary notions about the curative abilities of shark teeth, he did advocate their use in cleaning human teeth.


Depictions of the earth

Year: 1618
Scientist/artist: Johannes Kepler
Originally published in: Epitome of Copernican Astronomy
Now appears in: "Global Visions and the Establishment of Theories of the Earth" by Kerry Magruder in Centaurus, October 2006 issue
Although best known for his work in astronomy, Kepler also gave serious thought to the composition of the earth. He explained that the earth's axis was inclined thanks to magnetic fibers running parallel to it. He also compared the earth's daily motion to the spinning of a top. What perhaps seems stranger to the modern mind would be Kepler's conviction that the earth had a soul that both animated geological processes and responded to the positions of other planets.

Year: 1680-1689
Scientist/artist: Thomas Burnet
Originally published in: Sacred Theory of the Earth
Now appears in: Time's Arrow, Time's Cycle by Stephen Jay Gould
Most people today think of mountains as pretty if not beautiful, but Thomas Burnet argued that they were ugly — remnants of the humanity-punishing biblical flood. People didn't always

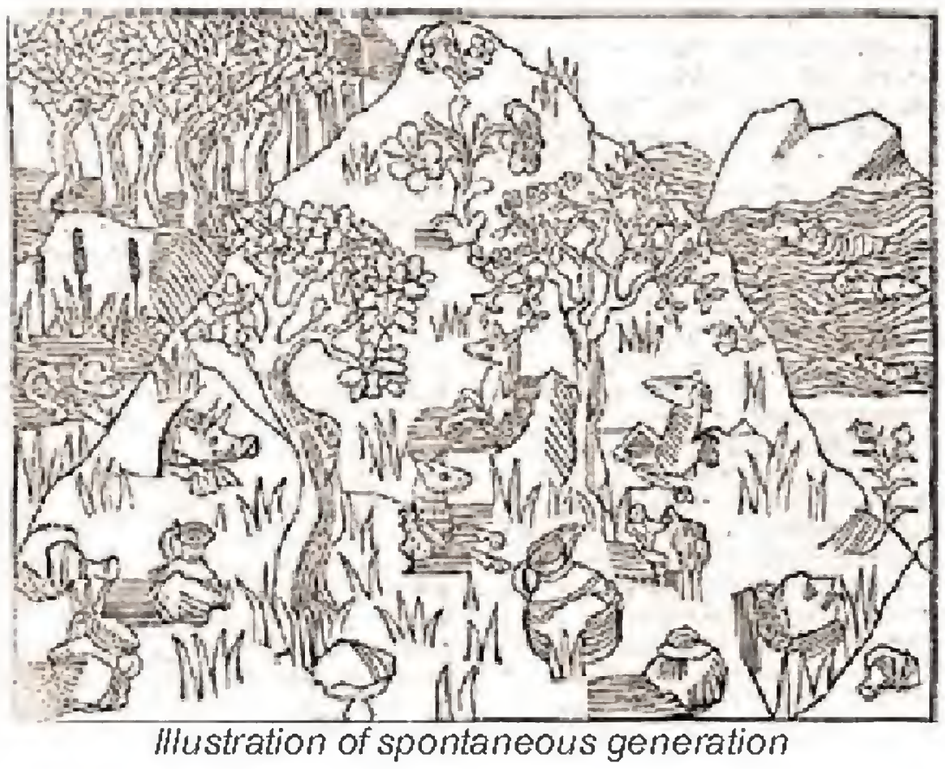


Illustration of spontaneous generation

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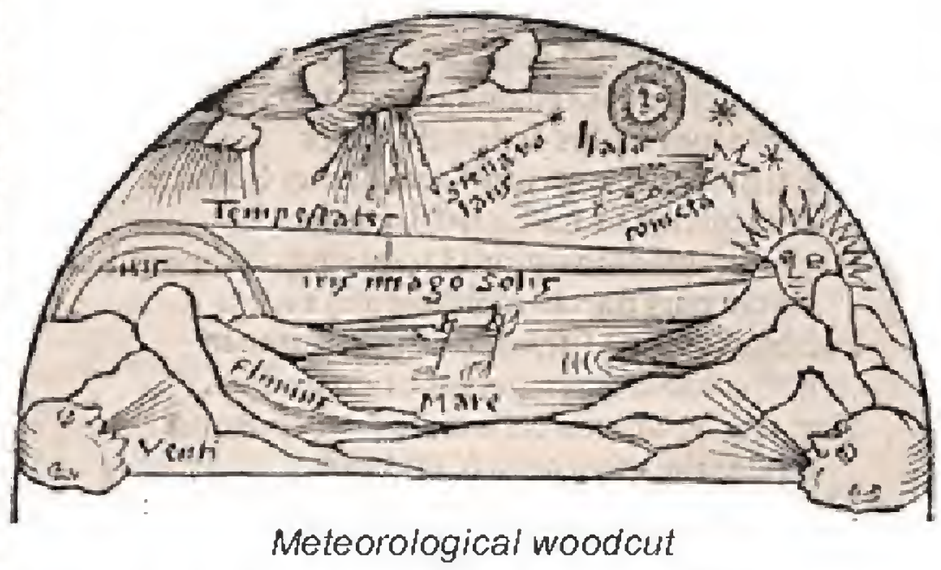

Meteorological woodcut

Year: 1512

Scientist: Jacques d'Etaples Lefèvre

Originally published in: Meteorologia Aristotelis

Now appears in: "Being the World Eternal" by Ivano Dal Prete in Isis

Today we associate "meteorology" with the study of the atmosphere and weather, but during the Renaissance, the term had a broader definition, including the combination of elements (earth, air, water and fire). This woodcut shows the elemental interactions studied by 15th- and 16th-century meteorologists. Works such as these contained plenty errors, but they also included something we don't often attribute to medieval and Renaissance Europeans: acceptance of an ancient earth. Meteorological works such as this frequently discussed the planet's long history. In this book, Lefèvre mentioned the Noachian flood only to say that it "does not pertain to nature, but to divine revenge." He was in plenty of good company. In 1542, Fausto da Longiano rejected the universality of Noah's flood and endorsed a 36,000-year cycle accepted by many other scholars at the time. Nearly two centuries earlier, Jean Buridan of the University of Paris had already rejected that same 36,000-year cycle as too short. In other words, the biblically literal creation date of 4004 BC publicized by James Ussher and still influential among many creationists today was largely born in the 17th century. Embroiled in the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, religious authorities and scholars came to believe that taking the Bible seriously meant taking it literally. Yet about the same time biblical literalism was taking hold, it was also being undermined. Niels Stensen (Steno) discovered that rocks are deposited in layers with older rocks underneath newer ones. Over the next couple centuries, the oddness of the fossils found in older rocks (and the dearth of human remains found in those layers) enabled savants and geologists to piece together an ancient history for our planet, overturning the young-earth literalism of the 17th century.

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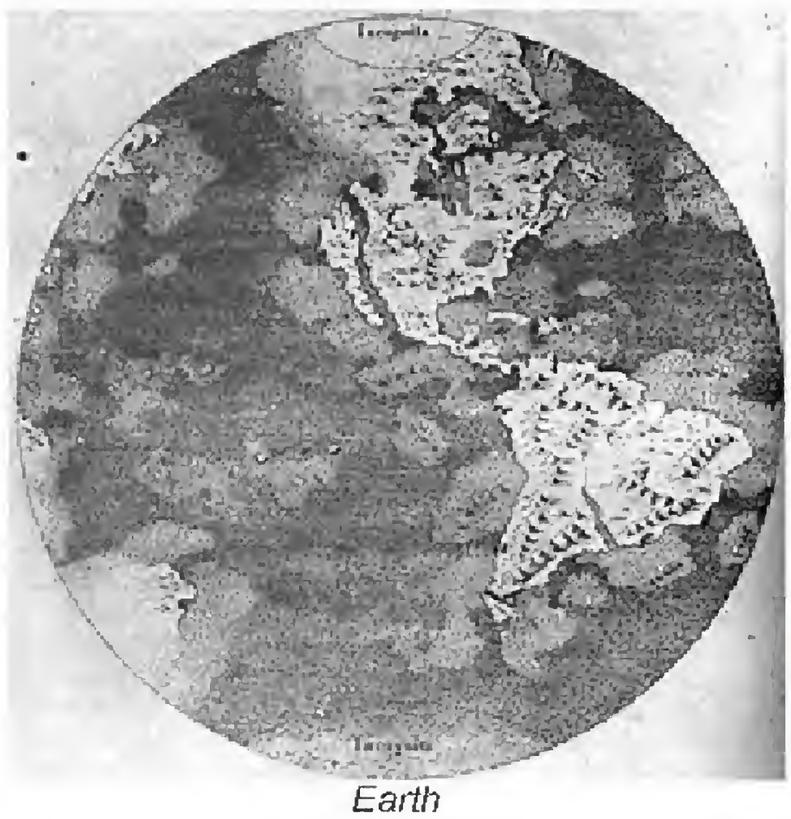
Year: 1760

Scientist: Edward Lhwyd

Originally published in: Editio Altera

Now appears in: Oxford University Museum of Natural History: Edward Lhwyd (http://www.oum.ox.ac.uk/learning/pdfs/lhwyd.pdf)

By the late 17th century, Niels Stensen (Steno) and Robert Hooke had advanced cogent arguments that fossils were the remains of once-living organisms, but plenty of their contemporaries weren't convinced. One of those was Edward Lhwyd, successor to Robert Plot as keeper of the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford. Lhwyd had a different explanation for



Earth

listen to Burnet as they should have, so he emphasized his point with global maps showing asymmetrical mountain ranges. Before the Deluge, he was sure, the earth had been a perfect, aesthetically pleasing orb.
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Fossil shell

Year: 1557
Scientist/artist: Christopher Encelius
Originally published in: De re Metallica
Now appears in: "Both Neonate and Elder: The First Fossil of 1557" by Stephen Jay Gould in Paleobiology, March 2002 issue
This little woodcut of a fossil mollusk wasn't a bad rendition, but Encelius gave it a puzzling classification. He claimed to have found an object described centuries earlier by Pliny the Elder: Chelonitis. Pliny described this object simply as "like a tortoise." How Encelius arrived at a tortoise interpretation of this shell is a mystery, but by including a picture of it — perhaps the first ever published picture of a fossil invertebrate — helped subsequent scholars identify it correctly. Conrad Gesner did just that not long afterwards.

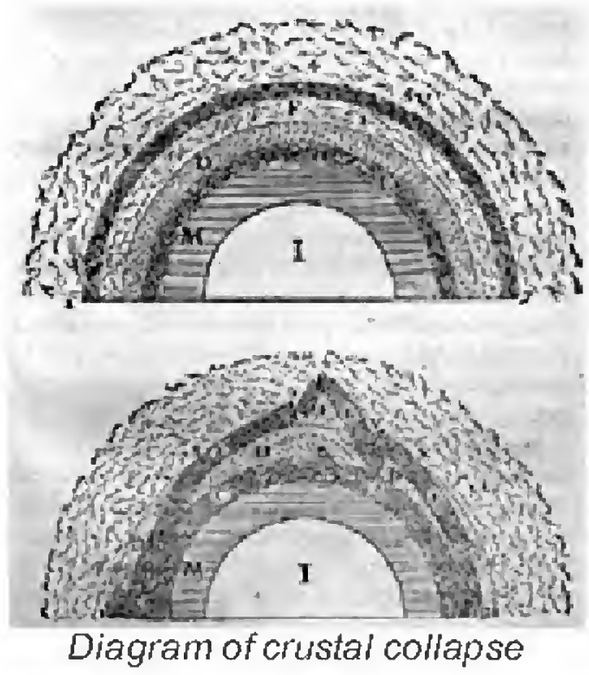


Diagram of crustal collapse

Year: 1644
Scientist/artist: René Descartes
Originally published in: Principia Philosophiae
Now appears in: "Global Visions and the Establishment of Theories of the Earth" by Kerry Magruder in Centaurus, October 2006 issue
During Descartes's day, Europeans struggled to understand how the earth had developed mountains and sea beds. He proposed that, over time, the "outer shell" of an initially soggy earth had dried out, and the crust had collapsed in places. The idea influenced the work of Niels Stensen (Steno), who relied on the phenomenon to explain parts of earth's geology. Crustal collapse turned out to be wrong, but that didn't keep Steno from laying important foundations of modern geology, and it's not hard to see how crustal collapse would have provided a plausible explanation for many of earth's features.

Year: c. 1356
Scientist: Sir John Mandeville
Originally published in: Travels
Now appears in: The Book of Fabulous Beasts by Joseph Nigg (Also discussed in Herodotus: A Very Short Introduction by Jennifer T. Roberts)
Described a millennium earlier by Herodotus, gold-digging ants of exotic India made an appearance in Mandeville's account. Said to be the size of dogs, the ferocious ants could

Gold-digging ants

only be parted from their gold by exceptional guile. Here, several ants swarm a horse. In fact, this fantastic tale might have been inspired by a mistranslation of the name of an actual animal. In the late 20th century, ethnologists and explorers discovered coarse-furred marmots in remote regions of the Himalaya. While burrowing, the rodents may dig up gold-bearing soil, and some local people even claimed to profit from the gold unearthed by the industrious animals. In the 5th century BC, Greek-speaking Herodotus knew only his native tongue, and may have interpreted the Persian word for "marmot" as "mountain ant."

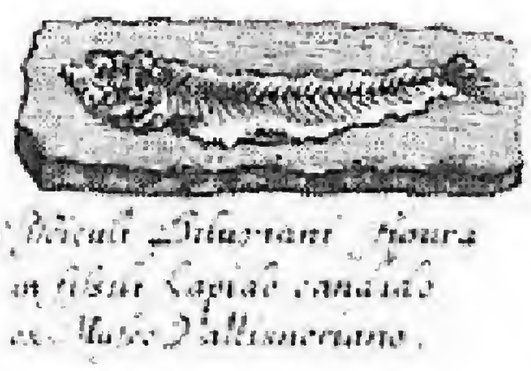
Philosophers' Mercury

Year: 1599
Scientist: Giovanni Battista Nazari
Originally published in: Della Tramutatione Metallica Sogni Tre
Now appears in: Astrology, Magic, and Alchemy in Art by Matilde Battistini, translated by Rosanna M. Giammanco Frongia
In producing this image, Nazari wasn't claiming that a creature like this really existed. But this "Philosophers' Mercury" image was intended to symbolize the near-magical metal. The way this three-headed, four-faced animal bit its own tail alluded to quicksilver's dual nature, both solid and volatile.

Narrative text and graphic design © by Michon Scott - Updated December 7, 2014

Fossil catalog

ornate mollusk shells in England's rocks. His biographer, J.M. Edmonds explained, "He suggested a sequence in which mists and vapours over the sea were impregnated with the 'seed' of marine animals. These were raised and carried for considerable distances before they descended over land in rain and fog. The 'invisible animacula' then penetrated deep into the earth and there germinated; and in this way complete replicas of sea organisms, or sometimes only parts of individuals, were reproduced in stone." Lhwyd compiled a catalog of some of the fossils he believed had formed this way, namely the British fossils of the Ashmolean Museum. Entitled Lithophylacii Britannici ichnographia, it was originally published in 1699. After Lhwyd's death, a new edition was published: Editio Altera. Shown here are assorted echinoderm fossils and a trilobite.



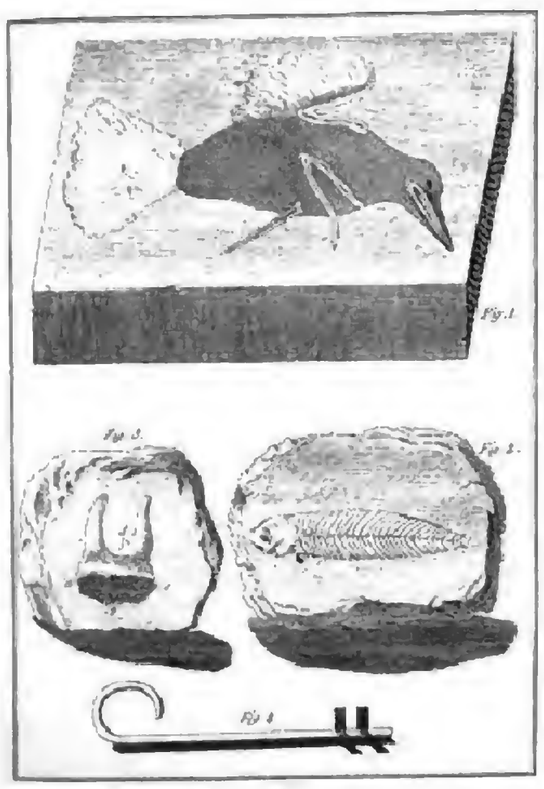
Fossil fish

Year: 1708
Scientist: Johann Jakob Scheuchzer
Originally published in: Bildnissen verschiedener Fischen und dero Theilen, welche in der Sündfluth zu Grund gegangen
Now appears in: Cultures of Natural History edited by Jardine, Secord and Spary
This engraving of a fossil fish was beautifully detailed and probably accurate. What missed the mark was Scheuchzer's characterization of this and other fish fossils as "The Different Fish that Died in the Great Flood."
Expanded image available

Curiosity cabinet vials

Year: 1706
Scientist: Levinus Vincent
Originally published in: Wondertooneel der Nature
Now appears in: Redressing the Balance: Levinus Vincent's Wonder Theatre of Nature by Bert van de Roemer in Public Domain Review
Cabinets of curiosities had existed as motley collections of unrelated fossils, plants, shells, coins, artifacts and fakes for many years by the time Dutch collector Levinus Vincent and his wife Joanna van Breda assembled their collection. But their cabinet was different. Historian Bert van de Roemer argues that Vincent intended to "emphasize the wonder of God's creations by restoring the natural world to its prelapsarian harmony." In other words, Adam and Eve's biblical fall basically broke nature, and Vincent and his wife intended to restore it through a meticulously arranged cabinet. (They weren't alone in thinking this way; some of the enthusiasm for inventions such as microscopes and telescopes stemmed from

the belief that those tools would restore the superior senses humankind used to possess.) The wonder cabinet included some 600 vials of animal specimens preserved in alcohol. Besides living in an age when natural historians relied on the Bible to interpret the planet's history, they also believed that all of life's diversity could be assembled in a single collection. Other goodies in the collection included shells and insects artfully arranged in patterns resembling lace or embroidery. As Van de Roemer explains, this was no coincidence. Vincent wasn't just a collector but also a damask merchant and fabric designer.



Fossil key

Year: 1782
Scientist: Robert de Paul de Lamanon
Originally published in: Observations sur la Physique
Now appears in: Bursting the Limits of Time by Martin J.S. Rudwick
In the late 18th century, savants were beginning to realize that the earth had an ancient past, but it wasn't clear to everyone that the ancient past preceded humans. One savant who believed that humans had been around for a very long time was Lamanon. This illustration shows fossils reportedly found in the gypsum remains of an ancient lake near Paris. Two of the fossils look credible to modern eyes: the fossil tooth and the fossil fish. Lamanon characterized the tooth as that of a mammal that was likely extinct. The bird appears, in Rudwick's observation, "suspiciously well preserved." But more suspicious still is the key. The key's presence in this collection of fossils was based on the word of a quarryman who claimed to find the key 80 feet deep in the gypsum deposits. He produced not the key itself but a drawing of it in the sand. Since the quarryman seemed sensible, his account was believed. Lamanon wrote, "I therefore consider it certain not only that the existence of men preceded that of the present surface of the region around Paris, but also that the shores of this lake of selenitic waters were inhabited by men living together socially and that in their time the art of working mines and forging iron was already known. I know of several other facts analogous to this, which prove incontestably that the crafts were cultivated in the times that precede the great physical revolutions that have happened at the surface of the globe." Perhaps the sensible quarryman's account was so easily believed because it so easily fit with what some savants very much wanted to think.
Larger image available

Year: 1664-1678
Scientist/artist: Athanasius Kircher
Originally published in: Mundus Subterraneus
Now appears in: Athanasius Kircher's Theatre of the World by Joscelyn Godwin
German Jesuit Athanasius Kircher was a polymath who studied everything from magnetism to comparative religion. At a time when boundaries had not yet been drawn between science, religion and art, Kircher mingled these things to spectacular (if not entirely accurate) effect. During the 1660s and 1670s, he published two volumes of Mundus Subterraneus (The Subterranean World). The volumes covered gravity, the sun and moon, eclipses, volcanoes, ocean currents, weather, minerals, fossils, astrology, dragons, demons, alchemy, spontaneous generation and fireworks, among other topics. To explain the uncanny

Bird images in rocks

resemblances these stony images bore to birds, Kircher suggested a few possibilities, including chance, petrifaction, and divine disposition enacted by angelic and/or natural forces.
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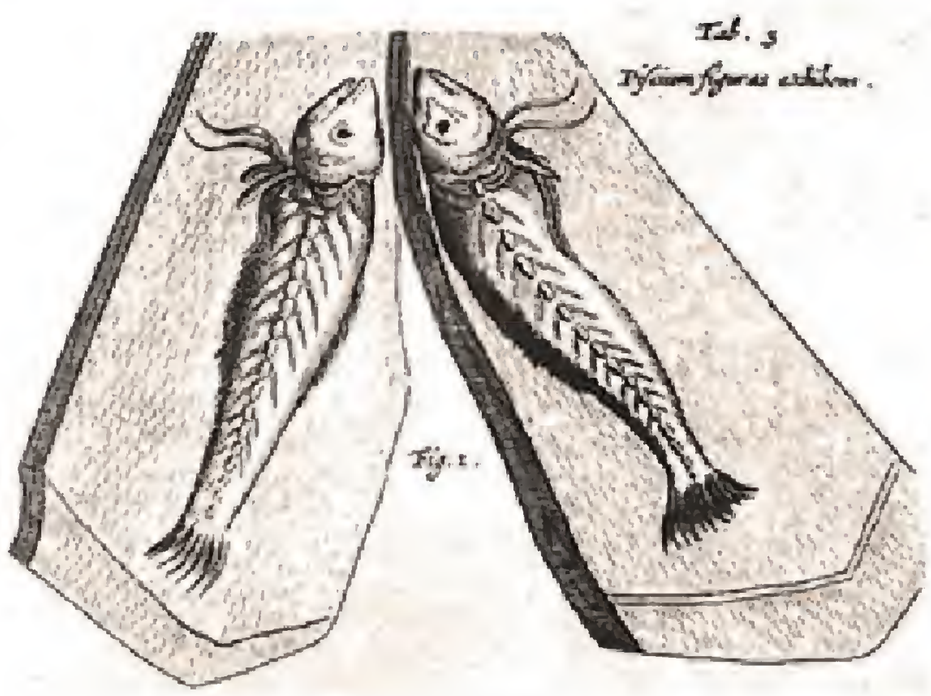

Fossil fish

Year: 1664-1678

Scientist/artist: Athanasius Kircher
Originally published in: Mundus Subterraneus
Now appears in: Athanasius Kircher's Theatre of the World by Joscelyn Godwin
Although the 17th-century scholar Kircher was often wrong about how fossils formed, he wasn't wrong every time. He provided a description that a modern scientist might accept when it came to these fossil fish. Kircher argued that when, say, a fish is encased in mud, a "lapidifying spirit" gradually turns the fish to stone. He further argued that the fish's internal organs and other soft tissues are consumed, or perhaps turned to dust. Although these fossil fish bear humanlike faces and more soft tissue than one could realistically expect from the fossilization process, Kircher's arguments about the process were cogent.
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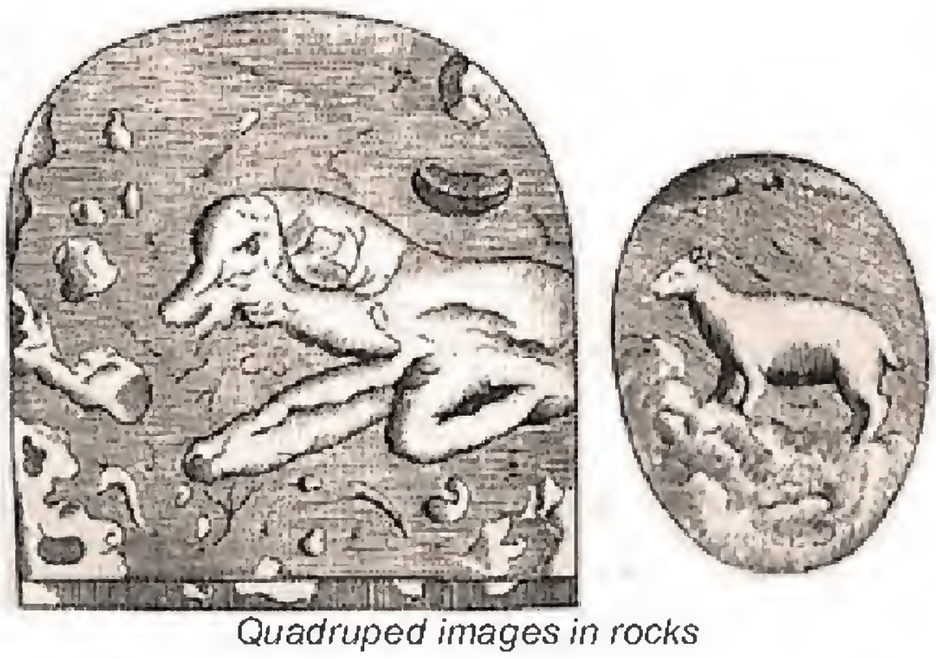

Quadruped images in rocks

Year: 1664-1678
Scientist/artist: Athanasius Kircher
Originally published in: Mundus Subterraneus
Now appears in: Athanasius Kircher's Theatre of the World by Joscelyn Godwin
Figured stones Kircher described in his Mundus Subterraneus also included quadrupeds (four-footed animals). Two examples appear here. The quadruped in the rock on the left looks like it has taken a beating (though the animal on the right looks a little too perfect). Although Kircher's figured stones may have been completely inorganic — with their figures enhanced by Kircher's imagination — the busted-up appearance of some of the quadrupeds in Kircher's figured stones aren't unlike the fragmented nature of some fossils, which may suffer anything from trampling to the crushing weight of rocks overhead to erosion.

Paradise map

Year: 1675
Scientist/artist: Athanasius Kircher
Originally published in: Arca Noë
Now appears in: Athanasius Kircher's Theatre of the World by Joscelyn Godwin
In the late 17th century, Kircher produced a book on Noah's Ark for the 12-year-old king of Spain, Charles II. In this book, Kircher wrestled with problems that plagued other scholars and mapmakers of his time: how to reconcile religious orthodoxy with reality. According to Genesis, four rivers — Physon (or Pishon or Pison), Geon (or Gihon), Tigris and Euphrates — flowed out of Eden. Although the present-day paths of the Tigris and Euphrates were well known, tracking down the other two proved a tad problematic. Kircher also tried to square the biblical river routes with his conviction that all rivers originated in mountains. The origin of at least one river in this sumptuous illustration was conveniently concealed behind the text panel in the upper right. In between the rivers, Kircher's map showed snippets of Genesis stories, including the murder of Abel and a troublemaking snake. Adam and Eve lived inside an enclosed, rectangular, orderly garden.
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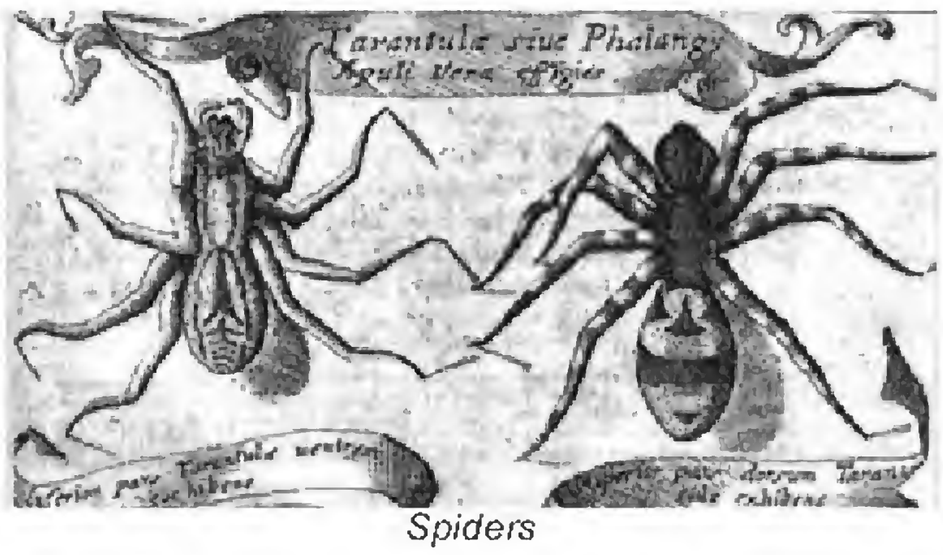
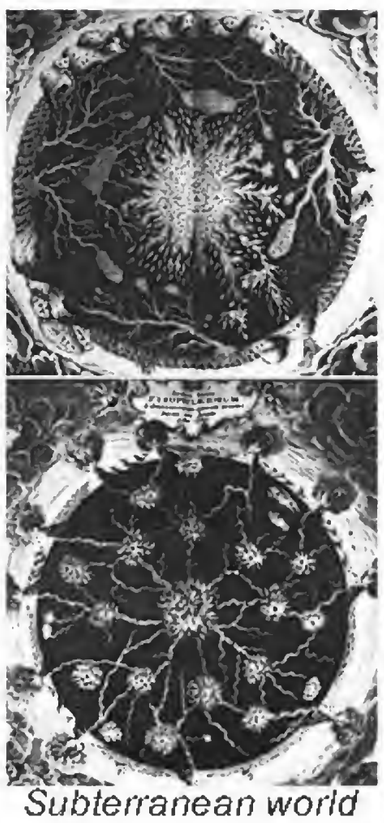


Spiders

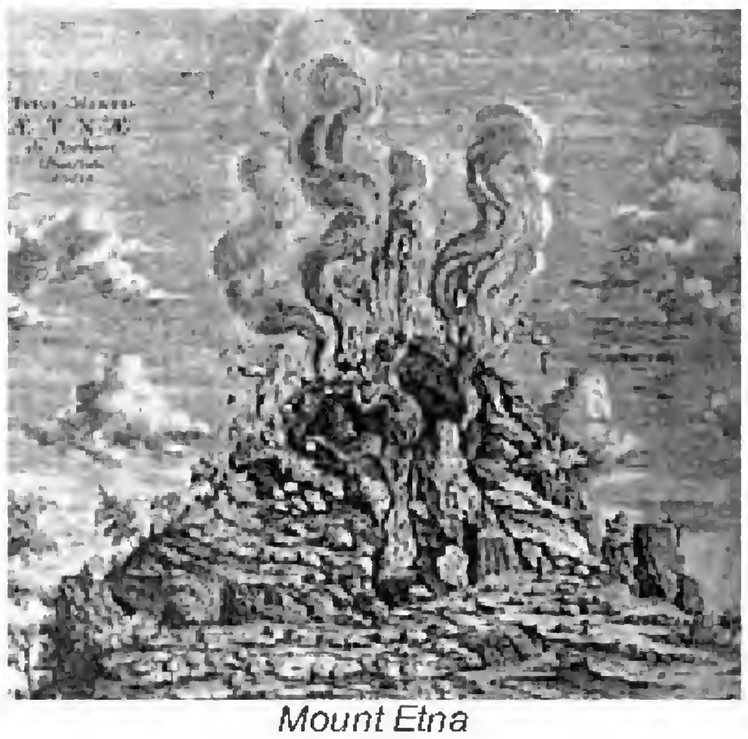
Year: 1641
Scientist/artist: Athanasius Kircher
Originally published in: The Magnet
Now appears in: A Man of Misconceptions by John Glassie and The Ecstatic Journey by Ingrid D. Rowland
Unlike the even bigger, hairier North American version, the Italian tarantula has been deemed fairly harmless (though still horrifying to anybody who hates spiders). In the 17th century, Europeans still believed this spider's bite capable of inflicting maladies ranging from lethargy to delusions to salacious behavior. Curing the maladies entailed listening to high-tempo songs known as "tarantellas." Spider victims reportedly danced involuntarily to the music, sometimes for hours, and even people who'd been bitten years earlier joined in the dancing. The 17th-century polymath Athanasius Kircher, who equated magnetism with pretty much all natural forces invisible to human eyes, said that the musical cure really worked by drawing out the venom magnetically. He featured the spiders and a tarantella score snippet in his book on magnetism.
Expanded image available

Year: 1664-1678
Scientist/artist: Athanasius Kircher
Originally published in: Mundus Subterraneus
Now appears in: Athanasius Kircher by Joscelyn Godwin, Rocks and Fossils by Busbey, Coenraads, Willis and Roots and A Source Book in Geology edited by Mather and Mason
The top image, shows Kircher's hypothesis that wind forces ocean water into underground



Subterranean world

reservoirs, from which it emerges through springs, rivers and lakes. Convinced that mountains gave rise to rivers, Kircher looked for the seminal mountains on each continent. The bottom image shows the earth's fiery core (which is also shown in the top image) feeding smaller fires that eventually emerge as volcanoes.



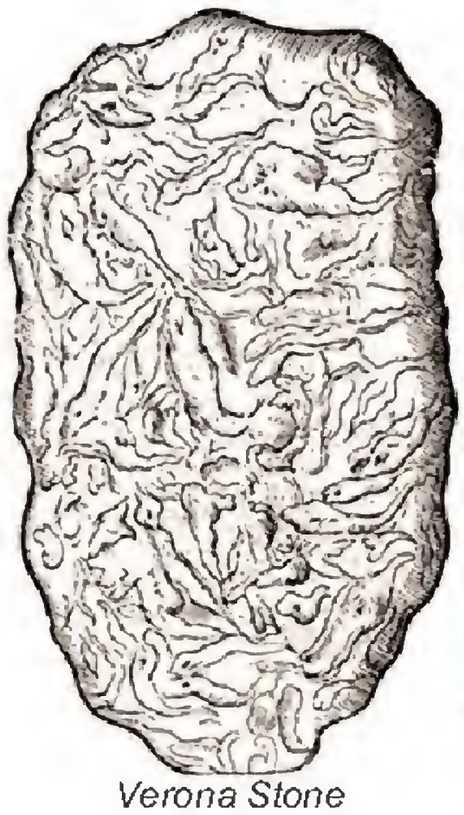
Mount Etna

Year: 1664-1678
Scientist/artist: Athanasius Kircher
Originally published in: Mundus Subterraneus
Now appears in: Possessing Nature by Paula Findlen
Though a little fanciful, this illustration of Mount Etna was far less speculative than Kircher's pictures on the earth's core. It was based on his own visit to the smoking volcano in 1637. The Jesuit visited Vesuvius, too, and wrote, "When I finally reached the crater, it was terrible to behold. The whole area was lit up by fires, and the glowing sulphur and bitumen produced an intolerable vapor. It was just like hell, only lacking the demons to complete the picture."
Larger image available

Toad stone

Year: 1665
Scientist/artist: Athanasius Kircher
Originally published in: Mundus Subterraneus
Now appears at: Athanasius Kircher at Stanford (http://www.stanford.edu/group/kircher/cgi-bin/site/)
Athanasius Kircher's Mundus Subterraneus covered subjects related to earth sciences when the processes of fossilization and crystallization were poorly understood. Kircher believed in a continual creative force in the universe, and to his mind, this creative force could devise objects with uncanny resemblances to living things. That might have been his explanation for this "toad stone."
Larger image available

Year: 1648
Scientist/artist: Ulisse Aldrovandi
Originally published in: Musaeum Metallicum
Now appears in: "Da Vinci's Paleodictyon: The Fractal Beauty of Traces" by Andrea Baucon in Acta Geologica Polonica
Mined from Jurassic limestone, Verona Stone was often used for ornamental purposes, and Ulisse Aldrovandi described it in his Musaeum Metallicum. Aldrovandi described the stone as a natural curiosity that imitated snakes. In fact, the odd shapes were probably caused by the



Verona Stone

activity of cephalopods, whose shells have been found in the same rock layer in abundance. The mollusks likely disturbed the sea floor, creating sinuous shapes. Although he misinterpreted Verona Stone, Aldrovandi did describe other trace fossils, such as bore holes, accurately.

Meteorite

Year: 1492
Publisher: Sebastien Brandt
Originally published in:
Open letter
Now appears in: Meteorites by Alain Carion
In the late 15th century, meteorites were sometimes called thunderstones. More importantly, they were often taken as omens, sometimes mighty convenient ones. When a meteorite fell on the town of Ensisheim, Sebastien Brandt, a law professor at the University of Basel, interpreted the event as a message from God, namely that Maximilian of Austria should invade France. Whether or not it was the open letter that convinced him, Maximilian invaded. The fighting turned out well for Maximilian and he gained three provinces. Troops in tow, he visited Ensisheim and inspected the meteorite, suggesting the locals hang it in a local church. There the meteorite remained for centuries.
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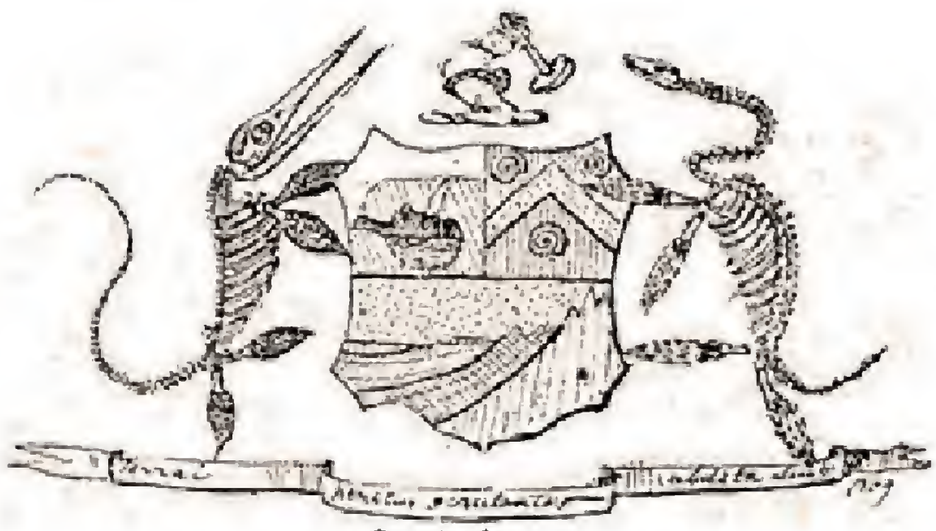
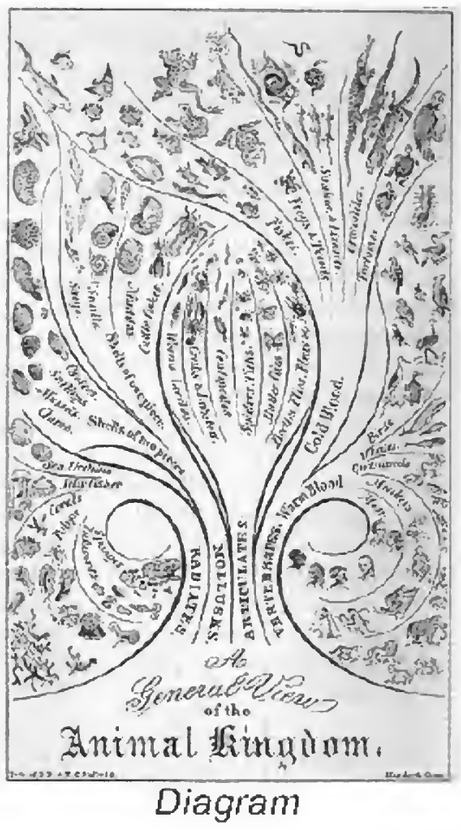


Coat of arms

Year: 1825
Scientist/artist: Henry De la Beche
Now appears in: "The Geological Society and its Official Recognition, 1824-1828" by Patrick J. Boylan in Geological Society, London, Special Publications
This is not a goof. It's just to pretty to ignore. In the 1820s, London's Geological Society was on the hunt for recognition, including a Royal Charter of Incorporation, and rent-free digs for its meetings and collections. An early president of the society, William Buckland, secured those prizes, but something else eluded him. He wanted the society to have its own coat of arms, and the process was pretty formal, including "applying to the College of Heralds for a Grant of Arms," according to historian Boylan. Though Buckland failed to secure an official seal, he and fellow geologist Henry De la Beche tossed around ideas, including this charming sketch. (Buckland made his own coat-of-arms sketch, but it couldn't compare to De la Beche's.) An ichthyosaur and plesiosaur act as playful "heraldic supporters" for a shield, which itself bears a cross-section of a fossil-rich cave in the upper left, an ammonite trio in the upper right, and an idealized geological section of part of the Alps across the bottom. Above the shield is the traditional weapon-wielding arm, but instead of the customary knife, this one wields a geological hammer. The Geological Society did settle on a logo decades later. It was polished and professional, but far less interesting.

Engraving

Year: 1776
Originally published in: De Anima Brutorum Commentaria
Now appears in: "In Retrospect: The Earliest Picture of Evolution?" by Fausto Barbagli in Nature, November 19, 2009 issue
Although many artists and scientists made mistakes, now preserved for posterity, plenty of other practitioners touched upon accurate ideas ahead of their time. Traditional wisdom maintains that the concept of evolution wasn't depicted prior to Lamarck's tree diagrams at the turn of the 19th century. But in the late 18th century, a Carmelite monk named Francesco Maria Soldini penned a book examining whether animals have souls. The Florentine publishers apparently decided to decorate the book with engravings bearing little relation to the text. The artists behind the engravings remain unknown, but this image apparently pictures animals moving from the sea to land. Perhaps inspired by the Neptunian notions popular at the time, the pictures could show early depictions of biological evolution, decades before Charles Darwin posed a workable theory.



Diagram

Year: 1858
Scientist/artist: Anna Maria Redfield
Originally published in: Nature in Living Forms
Now appears in: Aristotle's Ladder, Darwin's Tree by J. David Archibald
Born at the dawn of the 19th century, Anna Maria Redfield earned the equivalent of a master's degree from the first U.S. institution of higher learning devoted to female students: Ingham University, and became perhaps the first woman to design a tree-like diagram of animal life. Although tree-like, her diagram didn't show common ancestry but instead showed the "embranchements" established by Georges Cuvier: vertebrates, arthropods, mollusks, and "radiata" (today classified as cnidarian and echinoderm phyla). To be fair, this diagram was published before Darwin's Origin of Species but later editions of her work made no mention of evolution either. Instead, she wrote about our simian cousins, "The teeth, bones and muscles of the monkey decisively forbid the conclusion that he could by any ordinary natural process, ever be expanded into a Man." Still, her elegant work is great fun to behold even now.
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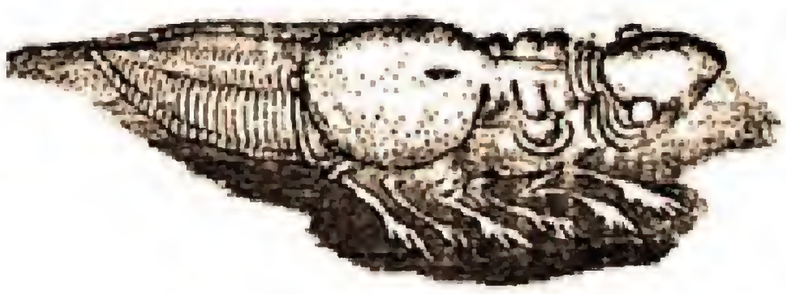


Leggy trilobite

Year: 1774
Scientist/artist: J.S. Schroeter
Now appears in: Trilobite! Eyewitness to Evolution by Richard Fortey
Trilobites were ancient marine arthropods that went extinct before the first dinosaurs evolved. Trilobite fossils have been found in abundance, but the fossils usually consist only of the shells covering the tops of their bodies. This rather froggy looking trilobite depiction includes purely speculative legs — as well as an extra head.

Sea serpent

Year: 1696
Con artist: Cornelius Meyer
Originally published in: Nuovi ritrovamenti Divisi in Due Parti
Now appears in: "Investigation of a Claim of a Late-Surviving Pterosaur and Exposure of a Taxidemic Hoax: The Case of Cornelius Meyer's Dragon" by Phil Senter and Pondanesa D. Wilkins in Palaeontologia Electronica
By the late 17th century, residents around Rome had long suffered flooding from local rivers. Rather than blaming floodplain topography, though, they tended to blame serpentine monsters believed to slither around the watery depths. A Dutch engineer named Cornelius Meyer knew how to solve the actual problem of flooding by building levees, but the workers he depended on were skittish. Legends told of a dragon living in the region. It has supposedly been killed years earlier, but new rumors claimed it was once again alive, and no one wanted to run into it at the work site. To get his workers moving, Meyer rather miraculously "recovered" the dead dragon, and later described it in his book, Nuovi ritrovamenti Divisi in Due Parti. Meyer may have cut some ethical corners, but the reliably dead dragon allowed the work to proceed. He probably could not have imagined how his dragon engraving would be appropriated as evidence centuries later. Around the turn of the 21st century, biblical literalists argued that Meyer's engraving really showed a pterosaur, specifically Scaphognathus crassirostris. Its presence in a 17th-century engraving "proved" that pterosaurs did not, as the science community claimed, go extinct tens of millions of years before humans evolved, but in fact lived through the Renaissance. Unfortunately for the pterosaur-seeing creationists, the engraving they cited was, although a hoax, meticulously detailed. It was so detailed that a reexamination published in 2013 did more than demonstrate that Meyer's dragon bore no resemblance to Scaphognathus crassirostris. By comparing the engraving to living and fossil species, the 2013 study authors figured out what Meyer probably cobbled together to make his monster. Senter and Wilkins concluded, "The skull of Meyer's dragon is that of a dog. The mandible is that of a second, smaller dog. The ribs are those of a large fish. The thoracic vertebrae probably are those of a beaver. The 'hind limbs' are the forelimbs of a juvenile bear. The wings, tail, beak, and cranial horn are fake." Dragon "skin" conveniently hid the junctures of the different parts.

Year: 1939
Originally appeared in: "Thunder in his Footsteps" by Roland T. Bird in Natural History
Now appears in: "History of Science: Fossil Proboscidians and Myths of Giant Men" by James L. Hayward in Transactions of the Nebraska Academy of Sciences (Also discussed in Quest for the African Dinosaurs by Louis Jacobs)
The worst thing about this hoax is how many people still fall for it. In the 1930s, American Museum paleontologist Roland T. Bird paid a visit to the Paluxy River limestone beds near

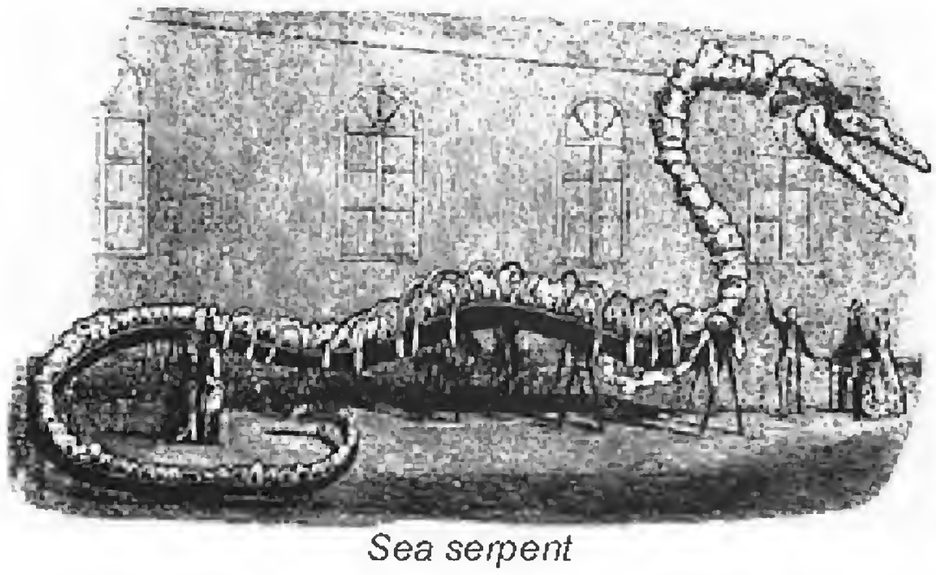
Skvader

Years: 1874-1918
Con artists: Håkan Dahlmark, Halvar Friesendahl, Carl Erik Hammarberg and Rudolf Granberg
Now appears in: The Historical Preservation Society in Medelpad
This cross between a female hare and a wood grouse cock was allegedly shot by Dahlmark in 1874. On his birthday in 1907, Dahlmark's housekeeper asked her nephew, Friesendahl, to paint a picture of it. Before his death, Dahlmark donated the painting to the historical society. Inspired to create a "real" skvader, the society's new director, Hammarberg, contacted Granberg, a talented taxidermist, and Granberg obliged him by making a stuffed specimen. In 1918, Hammarberg wrote an article in the local newspaper about the rare skvader, which, thanks to the sale of 3,000 postcards, would soon develop a worldwide reputation. Although some visitors to the historical society's museum are disappointed to find the skvader isn't genuine, few people have taken it very seriously.

Narrative text and graphic design © by Michon Scott - Updated August 11, 2014

Paluxy footprints

Glen Rose, Texas, to see a spectacular dinosaur trackway. Bird's visit came during the Depression, and some locals decided to sell tracks from the region in hopes of making some much needed cash. They quickly figured out it would be easier to carve footprints than dig up the real things, and that it would be more interesting to carve giant human footprints than dinosaur tracks. A fraud is a glowing success when it tells people what they want to believe, and many biblical literalists embraced this so-called evidence that humans and dinosaurs coexisted. Truth is, we missed each other by about 65 million years.



Sea serpent

Year: 1845
Con artist: "Dr." Albert Koch
Originally published in: Hydrarchos
Now appears in: Monsters of the Sea by Richard Ellis
This illustration accompanied Albert Koch's description of a "gigantic fossil reptile" 114 feet long. In truth, Koch pieced together the bones of five fossil whales, then showed the specimen in the U.S. and in England. The hoax was exposed on both sides of the Atlantic.
Larger image available

Sea serpent footprints

Year: 1937
Con artist: Tony Sarg
Now appears in: The Nantucket Sea-Serpent Hoax (1937) in Public Domain Review
In the summer of 1937, Nantucket newspapers began to carry stories of giant footprints, perhaps left by a sea serpent, on a local beach. The area had a long history of sea serpent sightings, and maybe some of the more excitable local minds pondered the possibility that a fabled monster had finally come ashore. W. Reid Blair, director of the New York Zoological Society and recipient of the serpent's alleged footprint photos, dashed their hopes. A marine mammal, he explained, would have moved mostly on its belly, leaving an indentation on the beach rather than distinct prints. But within days, there was a big monster on the beach. Local puppeteer Tony Sarg was behind the footprint hoax, and he followed up with a giant balloon of a sea monster. His sea monster enjoyed weeks of popularity in Nantucket before slithering off to New York's Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. As hoaxes go, this one was short-lived and fairly benign.

Year: 1997
Con artist: Unidentified Chinese fossil collector (who might not have known he was defrauding anyone)
Originally published in: National Geographic Magazine, November, 1999 issue

Composite fossil

For more information: National Geographic Magazine, October, 2000 issue (Photo by O. Louis Mazzatenta), Nature Magazine, February 17, 2000 issue, Unearthing the Dragon by Norell and Ellison

In 1997, a Chinese farmer found an exquisite birdlike fossil with faint feather impressions. A couple yards away, he found a lizard-like fossil tail. He took these and other finds home, glued the pieces together, then sold the result to a local dealer. To the farmer, it looked like a nice, complete fossil, which would bring him a little more money than shattered pieces. To less-than-careful eyes, the composite looked like a missing link between dinosaurs and birds. Over the next two years, the composite fossil made its way into the hands of a loose association of amateur dinosaur enthusiasts, professional paleontologists and National Geographic editors. With unprecedented achievement in lousy communication, various members of this group purchased the fossil for $80,000, insured it for $1.6 million, proudly announced the new species Archaeoraptor liaoningensis, then eventually wished they'd never seen the little fossil. Added to the embarrassment was the near certainty that it had been illegally smuggled out of China, a fact which — to its credit — National Geographic insisted be remedied before it agreed to publish the find. (The fossil was eventually repatriated.) The original plan was to describe the fossil in a peer-reviewed publication — a contingency that National Geographic gambled on — but after the paper was rejected by both Nature and Science, National Geographic didn't have time to pull the article. The magazine ignored its policy of awaiting publication in a peer-reviewed paper and announced the find. Just a few months later, Xu Xing, a collaborator in the research announced the bad news, and confirmed what a few others had quietly suspected: The fossil was a composite. In fact, it was a composite of 88 pieces. Finger pointing ensued. Creationists loved it. But as paleontologist Mark Norell has pointed out, the fossil never passed peer review, and the scientists involved revealed the forgery.

Mermaid

Year: 1842
Con artist: P.T. Barnum
Originally published in: New York Herald
Now appears in: Monsters of the Sea by Richard Ellis (Also discussed in The Feejee Mermaid by Jan Bondeson)

P.T. Barnum's skillful manipulation convinced thousands to see his "Feejee Mermaid." It was displayed for "positively one week only!" at a concert hall on Broadway. Years later, Barnum recounted with amusement how he had lured the crowds to see an "ugly, dried-up, black-looking specimen about three feet long . . . that looked like it had died in great agony."

A generation earlier, on the other side of the Atlantic, the mermaid enjoyed similar notoriety. An American captain named Samuel Barrett Eades purchased the mermaid in 1822, paying for the prize by selling the ship he was supposed to sail. The ship's real owner, Stephen Ellery, was hardly amused. Ellery hired William Clift, a talented anatomist and zoologist, to examine the specimen. Clift found the mermaid was a skillful forgery incorporating the head on an orangutan, the teeth of a baboon, artificial eyes, and likely the tail of a salmon. Eades didn't welcome this news, and later hired his own "experts" to assure him the mermaid was

genuine. After entertaining crowds of Londoners, the mermaid fell into obscurity for two decades before Barnum bought it.

Striped tamandua

Year: 1763
Con artist: Correspondent of Buffon
Originally published in: Histoire Naturelle
Now appears in: "Sloth Bones and Anteater Tongues" by Helen Cowie in Atlantic Studies
Like his predecessors, Buffon often relied on the kindness of amateur naturalists. Nature lovers living overseas would sometimes send him descriptions and even specimens of new plants and animals that he could describe in his books. But not all correspondents were honorable, and a clever con artist could even fool a skilled naturalist. Buffon described the "striped tamandua" in Histoire Naturelle and the hoax wasn't unveiled until after his death. He had really been sent a coati, a raccoon relative. The fabricator had removed the animal's teeth and given it stripes.
Larger image available

Snakes

Now appears in: Fossils: Evidence of Vanished Worlds by Yvette Gayrard-Valy and The Floating Egg by Roger Osborne
For many years, the ground in the village of Whitby, England was strewn with baffling objects vaguely resembling coiled snakes. Local legend explained that years earlier, the area was crawling with snakes which St. Hilda (Abbess of the Whitby Abbey) beheaded and turned to stone. This coat of arms of the town of Whitby recalls that legend. In less benign tributes to the legend, locals "found" the original snake heads and reattached them to the snakes, then (not surprisingly) sold them. In fact, the heads were skillfully carved from stone. And the snakes? They are really fossil ammonites that went extinct at the same time as the dinosaurs.

Ammonite with snake head

Now appears in: Fossils: Evidence of Vanished Worlds by Yvette Gayrard-Valy
This is an example of a snake turned to stone, better known as a snake stone. It appears to be a small snake curled neatly around its tail. Whoever "reattached" the head to this creature was very skillful; the spot where the carved snake head was attached to the ammonite really can't be detected. That this skillful forgery has been preserved to the present day suggests that it was highly valued.

Now appears in: "Ammonites, Legends, and Politics: The Snakestones of Hilda of Whitby" by Alfred Kracher in European Journal of Science and Theology

Book plate

In 1926, Edmund New designed this bookplate for St. Hilda's College, Oxford. The bookplate featured the saint holding an ammonite while standing on a snake, the origin of snake stone legends now clearly understood. In his article, Kracher argues that perhaps a clear intent to deceive with carved heads attached to ammonites didn't actually arise before the late 18th century, around the time when Walter Scott's poem Marmion popularized the legend of St. Hilda for a new generation, and the snake stones became gimmicks for tourists. Before then, ammonites, even without heads attached, might have been prized by locals for their association with the saint. The Irish story of Patrick — another saint credited with eradicating snake — might have actually been a metaphorical story of how Patrick displaced pagan druids, many of whom might have sported snake tattoos.

Fake fossils

Year: 1726
Con artists: J. Ignatz Roderick and Georg von Eckhart
Originally published in: Lithographiae Wirceburgensis
Now appears in: The Lying Stones of Marrakech by Stephen Jay Gould
In the early 18th century, Johann Bartholomew Adam Beringer, a professor and physician from Würzburg, published a book documenting "fossil" finds from a nearby mountain. His finds included everything from spiders on their webs to lizards with their skins intact. Legend has it that Beringer was the object of a joke by his students, but he was actually defrauded by two of his colleagues. When Roderick and Eckhart learned that Beringer intended to publish his finds, they nervously warned him that the fossils were fake, but by then Beringer was a man with a purpose. Although Beringer mistakenly assumed the fossils were natural, not carved, he refused to speculate any further, instead publishing his finds for others to analyze. Based on today's understanding of fossils, Beringer's mistake seems remarkably stupid. In his time, however, the process of fossilization was poorly — if at all — understood. Whether fossils were organic in nature or the results of the same forces that made rocks themselves was not yet known.

Year: 1726
Con artists: J. Ignatz Roderick and Georg von Eckhart
Originally published in: Lithographiae Wirceburgensis
Now appears at: AMS Historica (http://amshistorica.unibo.it/3)
In his "fossil" book, Johann Bartholomew Adam Beringer illustrated the specimens he found — carvings left for him by hoaxers. This plate portion shows lizards and/or amphibians with soft tissue preserved. The specimen at the top peers at the reader with winsome eyes turned to stone. The specimen below that bears little resemblance to anything in the animal kingdom. It apparently sports a canine head on one end of its body and a human- or monkey-like head on the other. The simian face grins, as if amused by the prank played on the hapless Beringer.

Preserved lizards

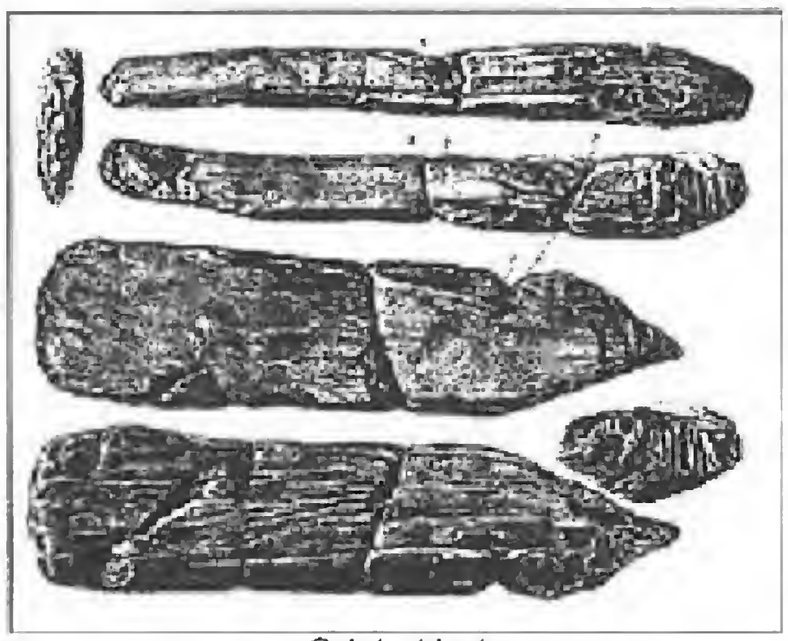
Preserved vertebrates and shells

Year: 1726
Con artists: J. Ignatz Roderick and Georg von Eckhart
Originally published in: Lithographiae Wirceburgensis
Now appears at: AMS Historica
(http://amshistorica.unibo.it/3)
This plate from Johann Bartholomew Adam Beringer's book includes more illustrations of fossils that could not exist, but in the middle of all the perfectly preserved eyes and innocent smiles, some so-called fossils look plausible: shells. Under the right conditions, shells can fossilize readily. But draped over them is another fantastical creature. These carvings, with their representations of things that could and could not fossilize underscores the difficulty common in Beringer's day of understanding not just how fossils formed but what they even were.

Piltdown

Year: 1911
Originally appeared in: Several hundred publications
Now appears in: Human Origins: The Search for Our Beginnings by Herbert Thomas (Also dhscussed!in Dry Store Room No. 1 by Richard Fortey, and discussed in detail in The Piltdown Forgery by J.S. Weiner)
Perhaps the best known case of scientific fraud, the Piltdown Man was believed to be the earliest-known human from Western Europe. In fact, it was the jaw of an ape (with filed teeth) paired with a human skull. Amateur archaeologist Charles Dawson collected a skull fragment in 1911, and claimed that workmen digging in the gravel pit where the fragment was found had given him another piece years earlier. More excavations turned up more material. Skeptics who suspected that the skull and jaw came from two different animals were flummoxed at the 1915 find of a second individual (Piltdown II) two miles away. Many (planted) animal fossils from the area corroborated Piltdown Man. The Piltdown forgery was far from amateurish; the perpetrator(s) understood human and ape anatomy, fossils of "contemporary" fauna, and even the gravel beds where the fossils were collected. It wasn't until 1953 that three scientists (Sir Wilfrid Le Gros Clark, Kenneth Oakley and Joseph Weiner) uncovered the hoax. Even now, the perpetrator is unknown. Suspects include English anatomist Sir Arthur Keith and British Museum employee Martin Hinton. Some speculation has even fingered Sir Arthur Conan Doyle of Sherlock Holmes fame, although most suspicion has settled on Charles Dawson. Exposure of the Piltdown fraud helped pave the way for acceptance of genuine hominid fossils, such as Raymond Dart's Australopithecus

africanus, whose implications (evolution of bipedalism before big brains) had been "disproved" by Piltdown.



Cricket bat

Year: 1914
Originally appeared in: Quarterly Journal of the Geological Society of London
Now appears in: Dry Store Room No. 1 by Richard Fortey
Of the evidence supposedly corroborating Piltdown Man, the most ridiculous had to be what Charles Dawson and Arthur Smith Woodward described as a "bone implement." What looked like a bone implement to them looked — to more discerning eyes — like a cricket bat. So outlandish was this piece of evidence that some historians have speculated this was an attempt to expose the entire hoax. If so, it didn't work. Dawson and Woodward published a paper about it.

Beilage z. Hanauer Zeitung

Der Schädelfund im „Teufelsloch" bei Steinau.

Striped tamandua

Year: 1911
Con artist: Wilhelm Rappe
Now appears in: "A Chimpanzee Skull in the Devil's Cave" by Oliver Hochadel in Endeavour
Shortly before Piltdown humiliated British scientists, a similar hoax embarrassed German scientists. Near the small towns of Steinau and Schlüchtern, locals had been exploring a cave known as Devil's Cave, or Teufelshöhle, since 1905. Overseeing the excavations — with an eye toward putting the region on the tourist map — was Albert Lüders, and he presided over an association devoted to exploring the cave. But one member of the association, an apothecary named Wilhelm Rappe, apparently liked a good joke, especially if Lüders was the butt of it. Rappe's brother had been to Cameroon and reportedly shot a bunch of chimpanzees. Rappe fished a chimpanzee skull out of his brother's collection, darkened it with chemical treatments and fire to make it look really old, and planted it in the cave when the workmen weren't paying close attention. In fact, they were paying even less attention than Rappe guessed because the skull he planted got tossed into a rubble heap after it lost its mandible and someone severed its nose with a spade. Those mishaps only strengthened the hoax by making the chimpanzee skull harder to identify. Scientists, some illustrious, were called in to consult. Verdicts varied. The one most taken in by the hoax was probably the anthropologist Hermann Klaatsch, who initially guessed that "the creature belongs to the group of fossils that link the race of the Neanderthals with the current apes." Klaatsch later backed off this assessment, identifying it as a fossil ape and arguing that it served as evidence of apes in Europe in recent geologic time. Meanwhile Lüders, wanting to sustain enthusiasm, published this big newspaper article in June 1911. It was about that time that Rappe realized the joke had gone too far, especially since Friedrich Heiderich — an anatomist who identified the skull pretty accurately from the start — was getting clobbered by Lüders's public relations campaign.

Rappe confessed to the hoax but tried to keep his identity a secret. It didn't stay secret for long, and the cave-excavation association and Klaatsch both wanted to sue. Klaatsch actually emerged from the affair relatively unscathed; his arguments that human races evolved from different ape species did more long-term damage to his reputation.
Larger image available

Year: 1869
Con artist: Geroge Hull
Photographed in: Cardiff, New York (some rights reserved)
Now appears in: "The Great Cardiff Giant" chapter in Autobiography of Andrew Dickson White (http://www.lhup.edu/~dsimanek/cardiff.htm)

Cardiff Giant

Before Piltdown Man, there was the Cardiff Giant, a "petrified giant" discovered during the digging of a well. The spectacular find was 10 feet, 4.5 inches tall and appeared to have weathered underground for a long time. Alternately identified as a Phoenician sculpture, an American Indian prophet and a biblical giant, it attracted fee-paying crowds, which soon enriched its so-called discoverer, Farmer Newell. But Cornell University cofounder Andrew White, who recounted the Cardiff events in his autobiography, smelled a rat. For starters, he couldn't see a good reason to dig a well where the giant turned up as "it was convenient neither to the house nor the barn; that there was already a good spring and a stream of water running conveniently to both." Farmer Newell apparently paid several thousand dollars scraped off the top of giant-viewing fees to some fellow out west even though he "had never been in condition to owe any human being such an amount of money." What stumped Dickson, though, was the weathered appearance of the limestone giant, with grooves seemingly carved by water currents over a long period. Then a friend surreptitiously brought Dickson a piece of the giant. The rock wasn't the tough limestone characteristic of the region, but gypsum soft enough to be scratched with a fingernail. And quietly observant farmers around Cardiff noticed a tall, skinny individual skulking around Farmer Newell's farm — the same man, it turned out, who had been observed transporting an enormous box to Cardiff shortly before the spectacular discovery was made.

Toad with tail

Century: 16th
Scientist/artist: Ulisse Aldrovandi
Now appears in: "The Oldest Herpetological Collection in the World: The Surviving Amphibian and Reptile Specimens of the Museum of Ulisse Aldrovandi" by Bauer, Ceregato and Delfino in Amphibia-Reptilia

Specimens collected by the 16th-century naturalist Aldrovandi numbered in the thousands. In the years after his death, his collection was scattered, most of the items eventually lost, or destroyed by age. But about 200 specimens still survive today in the Museo di Palazzo Poggi in Bologna. Among those hardy survivors are two toads, both of them sporting tails that were apparently added during Aldrovandi's day. Whoever enhanced these specimens was

thorough enough to cover the artificial appendages with skin from the same species. Modern herpetologists know this because, despite their faked nature, the toads still preserve enough detail to be identified down to the species level. There's little indication that Aldrovandi himself attached the tails, but he admitted the toads had been faked. Despite their extraneous parts, he believed the toads were valuable parts of his collection. And if this toothy toad looks particularly menacing, that might be because its pearly whites are not from a frog but from a mammal.
Larger image available

Dragon from ray

Year: 1613
Scientist/artist: Ulisse Aldrovandi
Originally published in: De Piscibus
Now appears in: Merchants and Marvels edited by Smith and Findlen
In his posthumously published book on fish, Aldrovandi didn't carry out a hoax, but instead showed how it could be done. This illustration showed a ray cleverly modified to look like a dragon. In fact, some collectors actually prized creations like this, even when they were known to be forgeries.

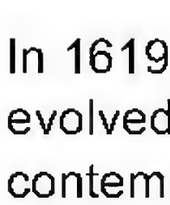
Dragon from ray

Year: 1640
Scientist/artist: Ulisse Aldrovandi
Originally published in: Serpentum, et Draconum Historiæ Libri Duo
Image provided by: Biodiversity Heritage Library (some rights reserved)
To anyone familiar with the appearance of a ray, this forgery might have been obvious even in Aldrovandi's day. The creature's "wings" are clearly pectoral fins that have been cut, and the mutilated fish came conveniently equipped with an exotic tail. Aldrovandi labeled this illustration "Draco alter ex Raia exsiccata concinnatus," which translates roughly as "Dragon dried and fashioned from a Ray."

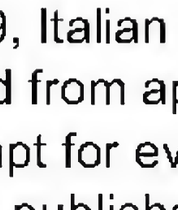
Sea serpent from ray

Year: 1558
Scientist: Conrad Gesner
Originally published in: Historiae Animalium
Now appears in: "Foils and Fakes" by Suzanne Magnanini in Marvels & Tales Magazine
Even before Aldrovandi's book showed how rays could be manipulated into dragons or sea serpents, Gesner demonstrated the same phenomenon. The bustling port city of Venice emerged as a locus of ray-faking activity, and it was the place of manufacture of another fraud Gesner disdained: the seven-headed hydra.

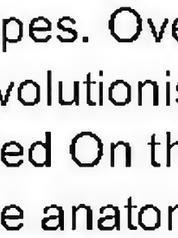
In 1619, Italian philosopher Lucilio Vanini was burned alive for suggesting that humans evolved from apes. Over two centuries later, popular society still reserved its sharpest contempt for evolutionists. Yet a literal interpretation of Genesis started to unravel long before Darwin published On the Origin of Species and The Descent of Man. Europeans were deeply disturbed by the anatomical similarities they saw between themselves and apes, and they struggled to find logical explanations. Some even lumped the Khoi-San peoples (called the "Hottentots") of southern Africa into the same group as apes, classifying them as degenerate children of Adam; citing their lack of "perfect reason" and modesty, 17th-century naturalist Edward Topsell argued that "above all they cannot be Men as they have no religion." Meanwhile, what some Europeans considered evidence of the Old Testament reached new heights of absurdity. Canon Johann Jakob Scheuchzer found a fossil of what he claimed was a relic of "the accursed race that must have been swallowed up by the waters" of the Great Flood. Less than a century later, French naturalist Georges Cuvier demonstrated that the bones had really belonged to a giant salamander.


Meeting with giant

Oct-12-2014


Map

Sep-21-2013



Eugenics logo

Sep-10-2014

Chain of Being

Year: 1799
Scientist/artist: Charles White
Originally published in: An Account of the Regular Gradation in Man, and in Different Animals and Vegetables
Now appears in: The Flamingo's Smile by Stephen Jay Gould and Humankind by Felipe Fernández-Armesto
This particularly odious depiction of "lower" and "higher" life forms was once widely accepted as part of the Great Chain of Being. In this depiction, the lowest form of human life is the Negro, and at the top of the ladder is the Greek ideal. The depictions are carefully arranged so that "lower" humans appear in close proximity to "lower" animals. "In whatever respect the African differs from the European," White wrote, "the particularity brings him nearer to the ape."
Larger image available

Year: 1799
Scientist/artist: Charles White
Originally published in: An Account of the Regular Gradation in Man, and in Different Animals and Vegetables
Now appears in: Humankind by Felipe Fernández-Armesto
White described this plate as including "copies of the best authenticated engraving" of apes,

Comparison

Map

Originally published in: Natürliche

Schöpfungsgeschichte

Now appears in: Human Origins: The Search for Our Beginnings by Herbert Thomas and Aristotle's Ladder, Darwin's Tree by J. David Archibald

Haeckel divided humanity into no less than 12 distinct species, based upon hair type, skull shape, skin color and eye color. Although he believed humanity now comprised 12 species, he maintained that they had all arisen from a single ancestral type that once lived on a continent now submerged beneath the Indian Ocean. Archibald notes that this image really consists of an ancestry tree superimposed upon a map, perhaps the first published graphic of that kind.

Human and ape heads

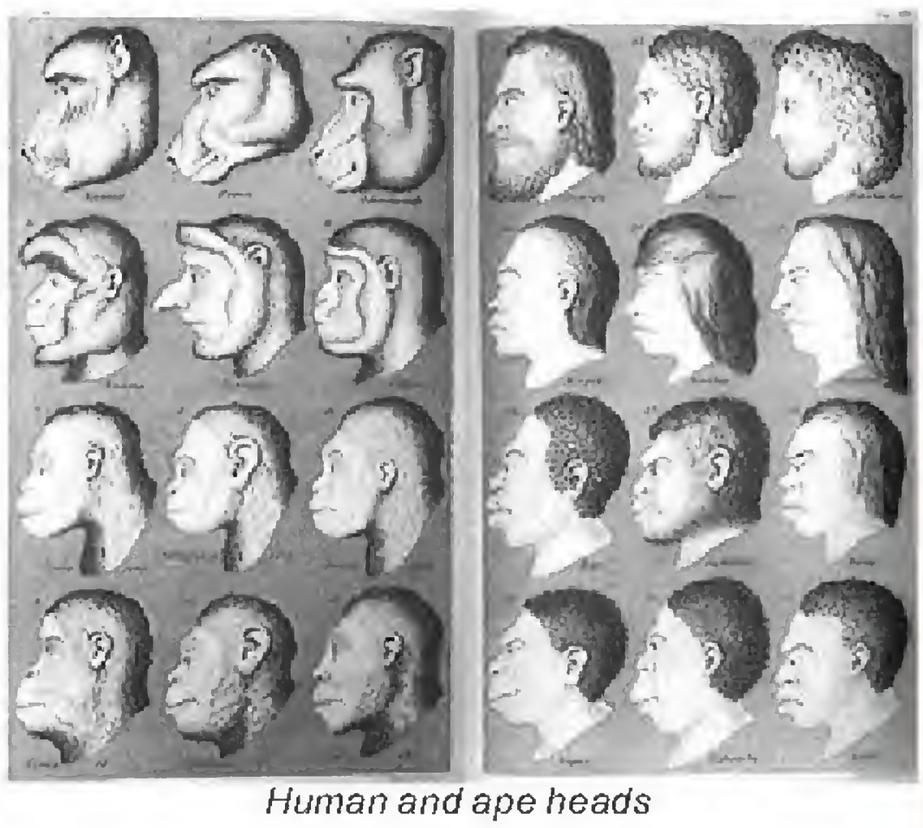
Year: 1868
Scientist: Ernst Haeckel
Artist: Gustav Müller
Originally published in: Natürliche Schöpfungsgeschichte (1st edition)
Now appears in: "Pictures of Evolution and Charges of Fraud" by Nick Hopwood in Isis June 2006 issue

Reminiscent of Charles White's 1799 diagram, this illustration pointed out the affinity between the "lowest humans" and "highest apes." The heads pictured here were supposed to represent — from best to worst, so to speak — Indo-German, Chinese, Fuegian, Australian Negro, African Negro, Tasmanian, gorilla, chimpanzee, orang, gibbon, proboscis monkey, and mandrill. An interesting shift from White's diagram was that the best of the best was no longer Grecian but German. In fairness to Haeckel, he didn't like this illustration much (his publisher apparently did), but an expanded version appeared in the second edition of his book. Haeckel was, to say the least, confident of the superiority of the white race, as were many of his contemporaries. But at least one scientist, Michael Foster described the illustration in Haeckel's second book as "at once absurdly horrible and theatrically grotesque, without any redeeming feature either artistic or scientific."

Larger image available

Year: 1870
Scientist: Ernst Haeckel
Originally published in: Natürliche Schöpfungsgeschichte (2nd edition)
Now appears in: The Tragic Sense of Life by Robert J. Richards

For the second edition of Natürliche Schöpfungsgeschichte, Haeckel drafted new pictures. As



Human and ape heads

in the first version, the pinnacle of humanity was the Greek ideal, but this time, the Greek sported a beard. So, by pure coincidence, did Haeckel.
Larger image available

African with apes

Year: 1874
Scientist: Ernst Haeckel
Originally published in: Anthropogenie; oder, Entwickelungsgeschichte des Menschen
Now appears in: Aristotle's Ladder, Darwin's Tree by J. David Archibald
Paleontologist and science historian J. David Archibald notes that Haeckel claimed all humans arose from a single ancestor, but the English translation of Haeckel's text suggests otherwise. It reads, "Both the African Manlike Apes [gorillas and chimpanzees] are black in color, and like their countrymen, the Negroes, have the head long from back to front (dolichocephalic). The Asiatic Manlike Apes are, on the contrary mostly of a brown, or yellowish brown color, and have the head short from back to front (brachycephalic), like their countrymen, the Malays and Mongols." Haeckel placed the African man in what appeared to be his rightful place, among the apes. The label for this figure, Neger, is a German term which apparently has a meaning just like the similar-sounding English term. Archibald writes that Haeckel "saw no problems couching racist views under the aegis of science."
Larger image available

Neanderthal

Year: 1909
Originally published in: The Illustrated London News
Scientist: Marcellin Boule
Artist: Frantisek Kupka
Now appears in: Life by Richard Fortey, God — or Gorilla: Images of Evolution in the Jazz Age by Constance Areson Clark and "Mirror, Mirror on the Wall" by Marianne Sommer in Social Studies of Science (Also discussed in Java Man by Swisher, Curtis and Lewin)
The first fairly complete Neanderthal skeleton was discovered in 1908 by Amadee and Jean Bouyssonie and L. Bardon. The "Old Man of La Chapelle" showed indications of intentional burial, a topic that would be debated for decades. But in the early 20th century, scientists tussled over myriad issues, including the basic question of how long ago the Neanderthal lived. Today the La Chapelle skeleton is estimated at roughly 60,000 years old, but when the skeleton was first found, scientists had few means of figuring out its exact age. Marcellin Boule estimated the skeleton's age at just 20,000 years. Another basic question

dealt with how different Neanderthals were from us. Earlier hypotheses about the first recognized Neanderthal fossil, found in the 1850s, suggested that that individual suffered from rickets, hence the bowed legs, and that the pain from the condition caused the sufferer to habitually furrow his brow, producing prominent brow ridges. (In fact, extensive use of muscles can cause bone buildup where those muscles attach, but they can't make a modern human skull look Neanderthal.) Boule worked with the artist Frantisek Kupka, who rendered this Neanderthal as very different from modern humans: hairy, savage, blank-faced, wielding a club. The Illustrated London News quickly reproduced Kupka's illustration. How much Boule approved of this particular image isn't entirely clear.

Modern human and Neanderthal

Year: 1911
Originally published in: The Illustrated London News
Scientist: Arthur Keith
Artist: Amédée Forestier
Now appears in: "Mirror, Mirror on the Wall" by Marianne Sommer in Social Studies of Science
In sharp contrast to French paleontologist Marcellin Boule (above), British anthropologist Sir Arthur Keith believed that humans had acquired more or less modern anatomy very long ago. (He also believed that humans originated in Europe, and he has been named as the possible culprit behind the Piltdown Hoax.) The picture of the spear-wielding specimen on the left was titled, "Modern Man, the Mammoth-Slayer: The Briton of 170,000 Years Ago." This was based on the Galley Hill Man, considered to be a modern human. Only slightly less impressive was the specimen on the right, the Neanderthal known as the Old Man of La Chapelle, and this vignette was titled, "Not in the 'Gorilla' Stage: The Man of 500,000 Years Ago." Boule's estimate of the La Chapelle Neanderthal age was off from modern estimates by some 40,000 years, but his guess was much closer than Keith's. By modern estimates, Neanderthals did not evolve until about 200,000 years ago. Anatomically modern humans — and that term is less straightforward than you might think since it's based on an overall tendency toward modern features — evolved at about the same time, but they first evolved in Africa, not Europe. So Keith substantially overestimated the age of both the mammoth-hunting Briton and the Neanderthal. But the rendition of this noble Neanderthal is arguably closer to modern interpretations than Boule's brute.

Year: 1922
Originally published in: Illustrated London News
Scientists: Henry Fairfield Osborn and Grafton Elliot Smith
Now appears in: God — or Gorilla: Images of Evolution in the Jazz Age by Constance Areson Clark
The year 1922 found the American Museum of Natural History's Henry Fairfield Osborn clashing with ardent anti-evolutionist William Jennings Bryan, the "Scopes Monkey Trial" being just a few years away. When Nebraska paleontologist Harold Cook found a fossil tooth that might belong to a primate, Osborn saw his opportunity. How deliciously ironic that an early human tooth might come from Bryan's own home state! Well, the tooth did come from

Hesperopithecus

Nebraska. It also came from a pig. Bryan and generations of creationists delighted in pointing out Osborn's gaffe. Fewer have been anxious to acknowledge that the definitive debunking of Hesperopithecus (Nebraska Man) came from William King Gregory — an evolutionist and Osborn's own former student.
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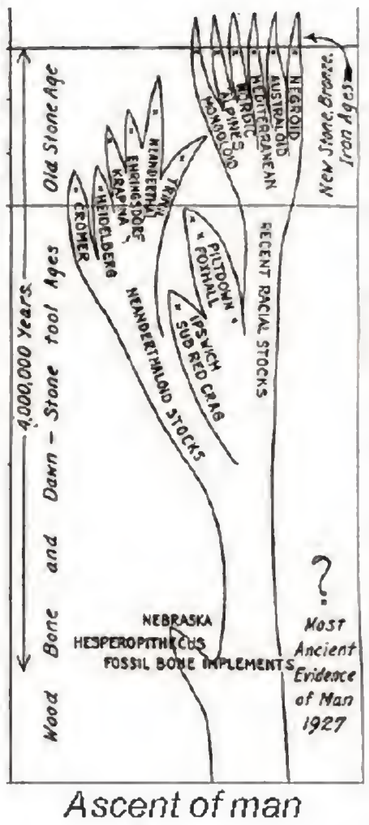

Ascent of man diagram

Year: 1927
Appears in: "Recent Discoveries Relating to the Origin and Antiquity of Man" in Science
Scientist: Henry Fairfield Osborn
In a single paper in Science, Osborn slammed Darwin, Haeckel and Huxley for missing or ignoring "the profound cleft between ape and man;" asserted that "the home of primitive man should be looked for in the same kind of country in which the primitive horse flourished" (that would be Asia); asserted that Neanderthals didn't have to work hard to find food or survive in their environment; insisted that the ancestors of the "higher races of man" could not occur "south of the Neanderthal Eurasiatic belt, because to the south conditions of life were less rigorous;" and described the brain capacity of Homo erectus as "not far inferior to that of the native Indian Veddahs." And he backed up his assertions with the evidence of Piltdown Man and Nebraska Man. Piltdown Man hadn't yet been exposed as a hoax, and Nebraska Man's tooth hadn't yet been identified as that of a pig. This unwelcome bit of dental news would arrive — also in Science — several months later.
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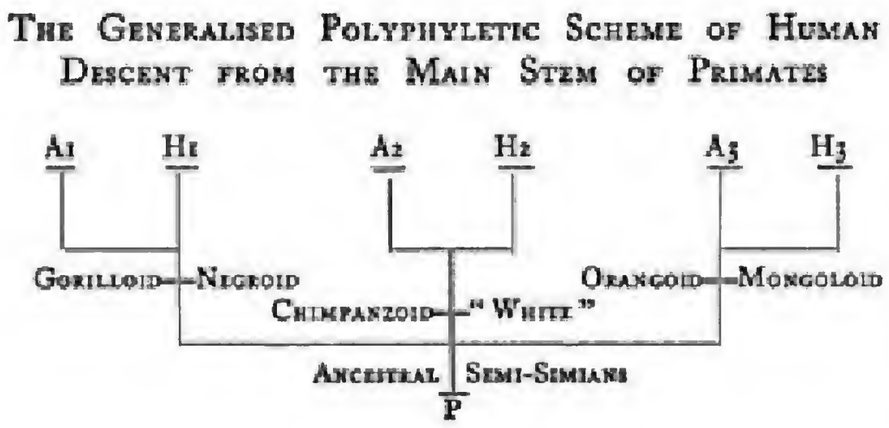
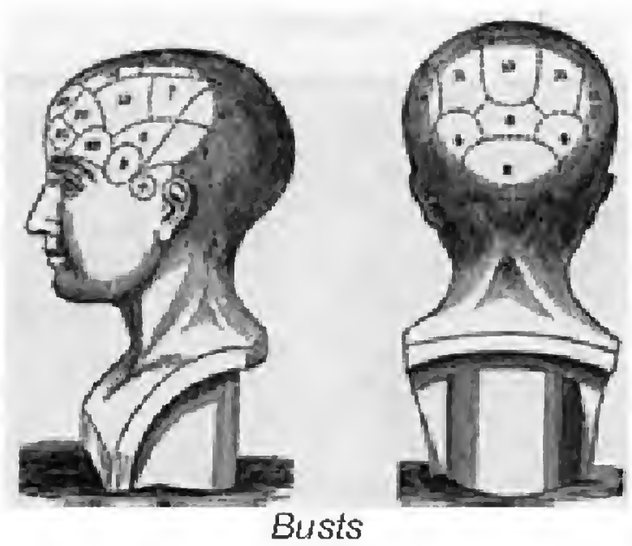


Human family tree

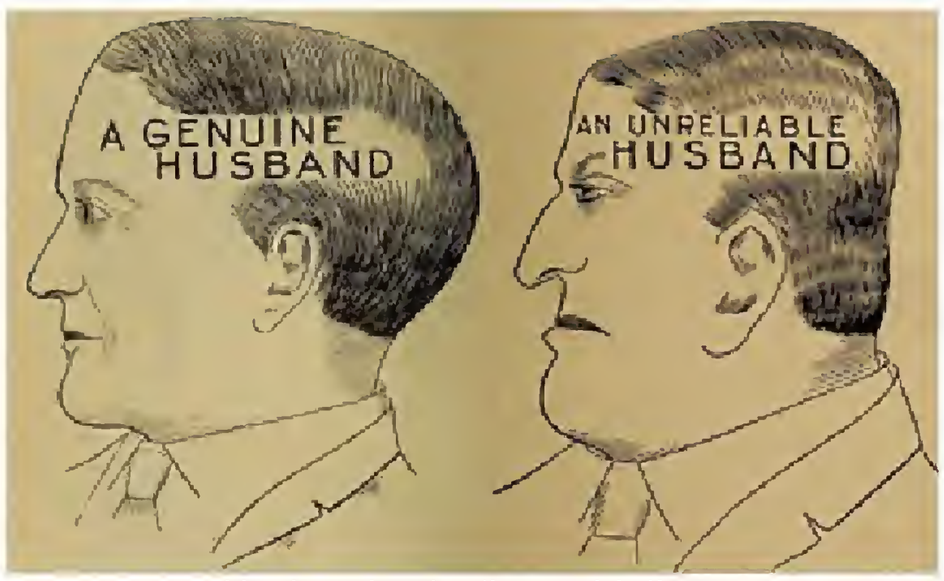
Year: 1931
Originally published in: The Mongol in Our Midst: A Study of Man and His Three Faces
Scientist: Francis Crookshank
Now appears in: "Welcome to the Twilight Zone: A Forgotten Early Phase of Human Evolutionary Studies" by Richard G. Delisle in Endeavour
British physician Crookshank laid out his view of human ancestry in 1931. He believed in polyphyletism, i.e., that humankind had derived from multiple ancestral lines that were isolated from each other. He further linked the different human races with what he believed to be their closest simian relatives. Crookshank wasn't the first polyphyletist but luckily he was one of the last.

Year: 1836



Busts

Scientist: George Combe (based on earlier work by Johann Caspar Spurzheim)
Originally published in: Outlines of Phrenology
Now appears in: Victorian Sensation by James A. Secord (Also discussed in Postcards from the Brain Museum by Brian Burrell, and Making Modern Science by Bowler and Morus)
Although modern science has tied certain functions to various regions of the brain, we realize there's still so much we don't know. Nineteenth-century phrenologists were a lot more confident — and convinced that they could tell a patient's mental abilities from the shape of his or her skull. "Phrenological organs" of the brain named in this work included (among many others) destructiveness, secretiveness, veneration, hope, wonder, wit and individuality. Spurzheim, the popularizer of phrenology, took many of his ideas from Franz Josef Gall. Gall and Spurzheim started out as colleagues but later had a philosophical split. Though he got wrapped up in the silly notion of skull shapes, Gall was onto something regarding localization of certain brain functions.



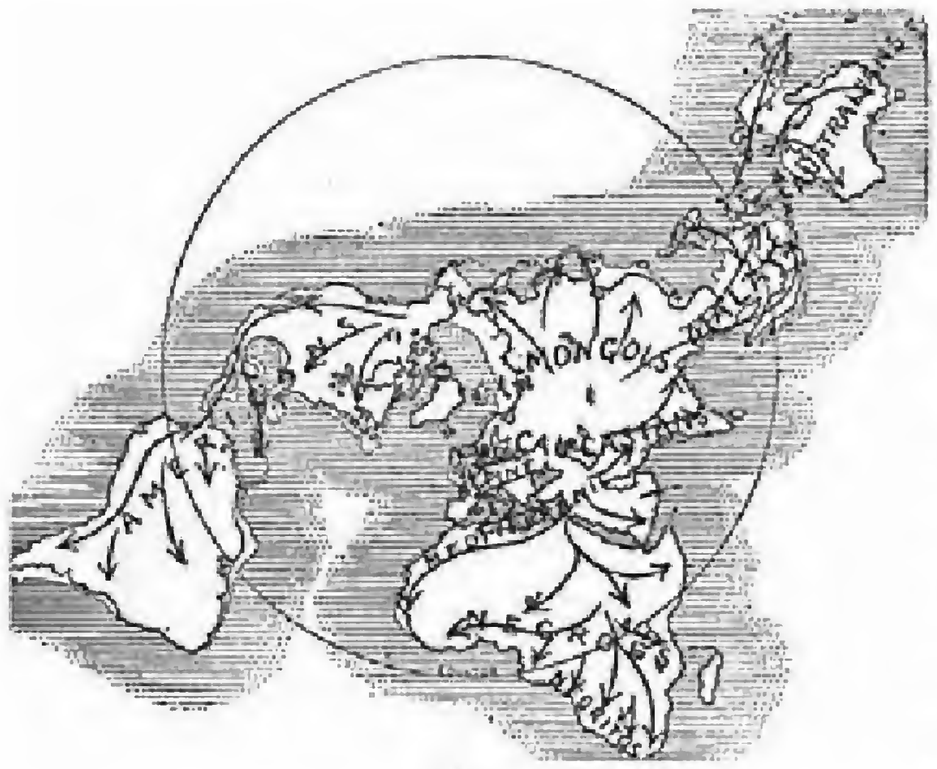
Husband-selection guidelines

Year: 1902
Scientist: L.A. Vaught
Originally published in: Vaught's Practical Character Reader
Now appears in: Phrenology Diagrams in Public Domain Review
Popular confidence in phrenology lasted through the 19th century and into the 20th. At the dawn of the 20th century, Vaught sought to offer practical advice for people wanting to understand human nature, no matter the country. "More than a million observations have been made to confirm the examinations," the author boasted. This pair of illustrations aimed to help women choose good husbands. For the picture on the left, Vaught advised, "Young ladies, indelibly fix this shape of head in your memories. Any man who will make a natural, kind and true husband will have a head in outline from a side view like this." For the picture on the right, Vaught cautioned, "The reason this man is an unreliable husband is because his is very weak in Conjugality and Parental Love and exceedingly strong in Amativeness. Young ladies, beware of such men as husbands." Among that man's likely sins were bigamy and polygamy.

Mandrill

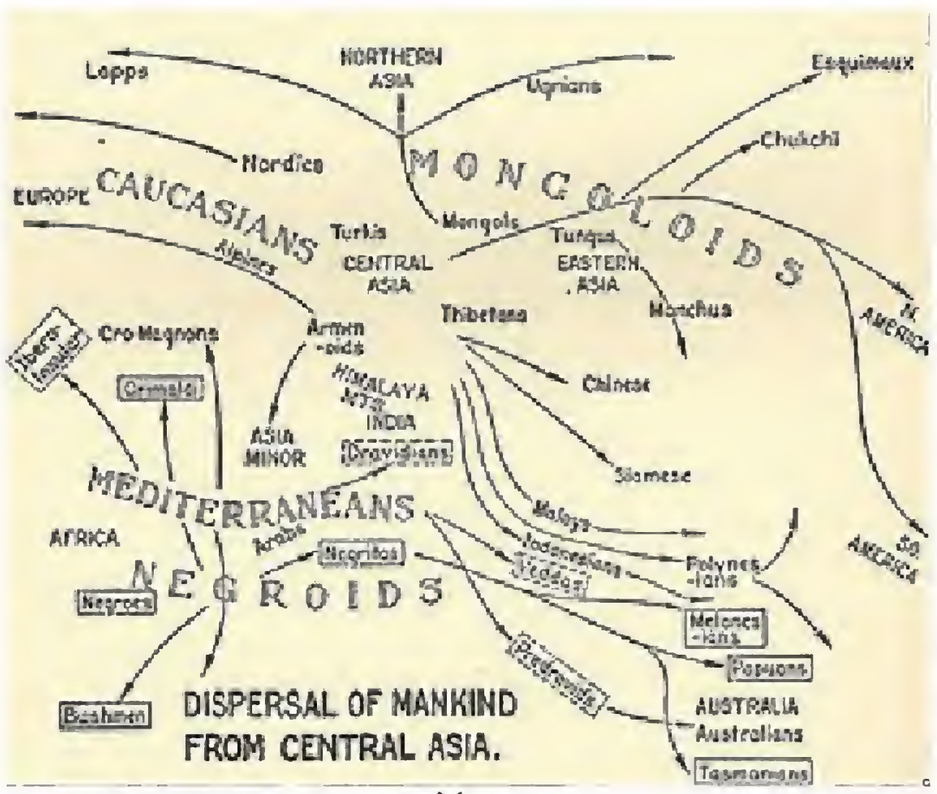
Year: 1744
Scientist: William Smith (not the 19th-century geologist)
Now appears in: Man's Place in Nature by T.H. Huxley
Huxley discredited this image in 1863, and suggested that it really represented a chimpanzee. By the time Huxley wrote, human understanding of the great apes had substantially improved. He quoted from a paper published in 1852 by a new researcher: "opportunities for receiving a knowledge of the [gorilla] have not been wanting; traders having for one hundred years frequented [the Congo region of Africa], and specimens, such as have been brought

here within a year, could not have been exhibited without having attracted the attention of the most stupid."



Map

Year: 1915
Scientist: William Diller Matthew
Originally published in: "Climate and Evolution" in Annals N.Y. Acad. Sci.
Now appears in: Man Rises to Parnassus by Henry Fairfield Osborn
Following up a lecture he delivered in 1911, William Diller Matthew published this map showing his hypothesis about the origin and dispersal of human races. From Asia, "Mongols" headed north and into the Americas, "Caucasians" headed into southern and western Europe, "Malays" went eastward and morphed into Australian Aborigines, and "Negroids" aimed for Africa. "Negritos" probably referred to the Khoi-San of southern Africa. Nobody much liked the idea now commonly accepted today: African ancestry for all modern humans.



Map

Year: 1927
Scientist: Henry Fairfield Osborn
Originally published in: Man Rises to Parnassus
After praising Linnaeus for designating humans as Homo sapiens, Osborn quickly corrected the 18th-century naturalist. "Through anatomical researches among the Asiatics and Africans, we now subdivide Homo sapiens into three or more absolutely distinct stocks, which in zoology would be given the rank of species, if not of genera; these stocks are popularly known as the Caucasian, the Mongolian, and the Negroid." He elaborated, "The spiritual, intellectual, moral, and physical characters which separate these three great human stocks are very profound and ancient. In the author's opinion these three primary stocks diverged from each other during the Age of Mammals, even before the beginning of the Pleistocene or Ice Age. The Negroid stock is even more ancient than the Caucasian and Mongolian, a may be proved by an examination not only of the brain . . ." Like others before him, Osborn argued that early humans arose in Asia. The caption for this map read, "Theory of Central Asiatic Origin and Dispersal of Mankind. After W.K. Gregory, 1924. Leidy, Matthew, Osborn and Gregory are among those who have favored the theory of an upland or plateau region as the original homeland of man." Two years before Osborn's Parnassus book was published, Raymond Dart had found Australopithecus africanus, a human ancestor in Africa, but few people were taking the find seriously.
As the saying goes, the more things change, the more they stay the same. Eighty-seven years after Osborn argued for ancient and profound divisions between "the Caucasian, the

Mongolian, and the Negroid" in Man Rises to Parnassus, Nicholas Wade claimed in his new book, A Troublesome Inheritance, that human evolution over the past 50,000 years has produced sharp divides between races, with white Europeans best suited genetically to the political and economic institutions now dominating the world. About all Wade's book lacked was evidence which, he insisted, didn't exist purely because academia's thought police had scared scientists away from such "career-destroying" research. In fact, scientists kept investigating genes, race and intelligence in all those years separating Osborn's and Wade's books. What such investigations have found is that the greatest variation in humans exists not between African and other populations but within African populations.
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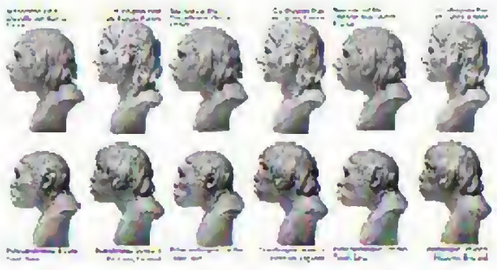
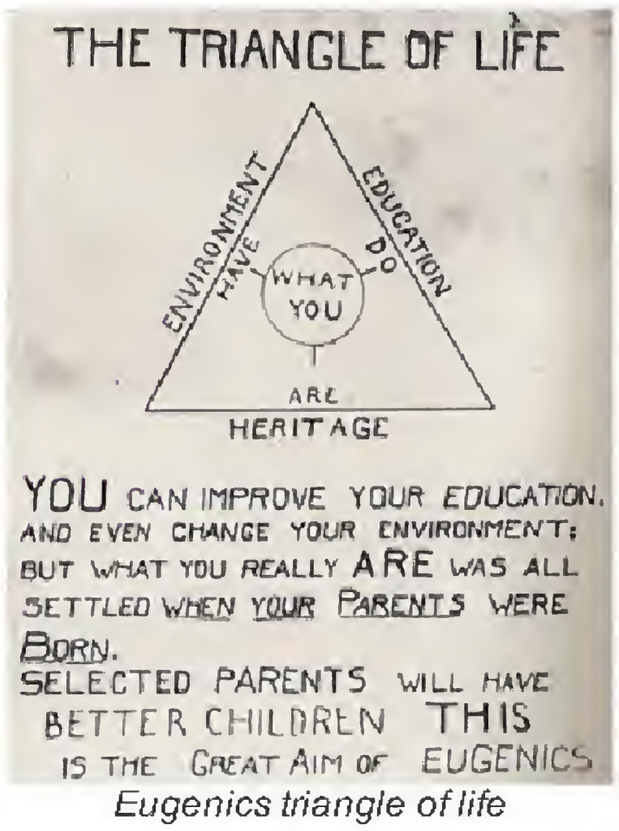


Faces

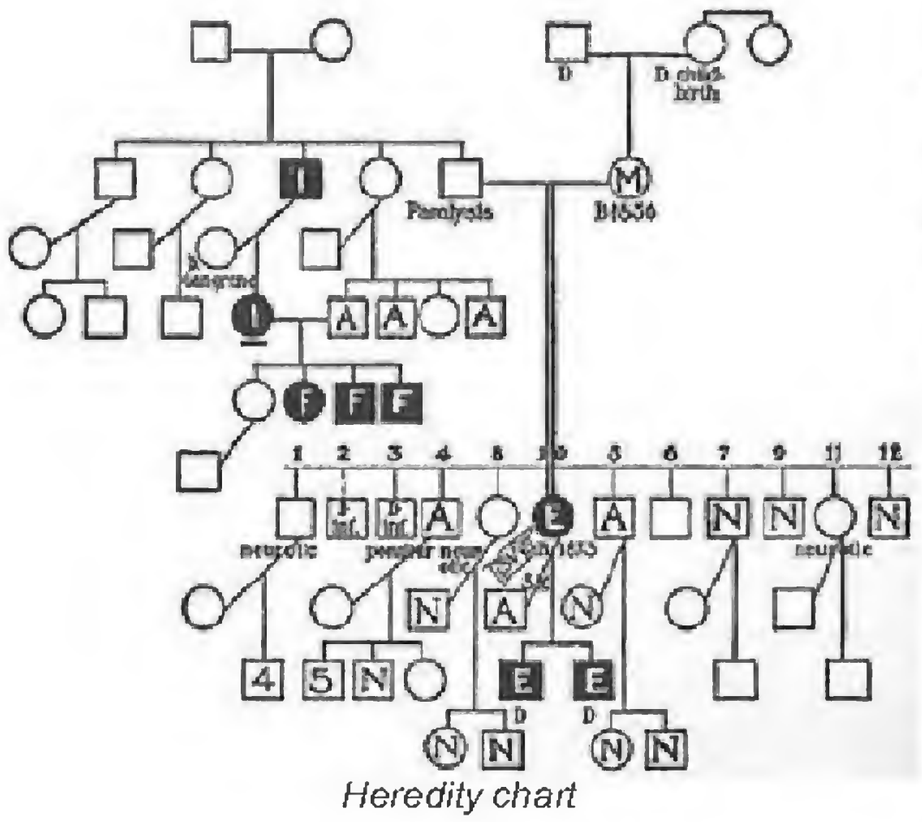
Year: 1927
Scientist: Henry Fairfield Osborn
Artist: James Howard McGregor
Originally published in: Man Rises to Parnassus
Titled "The Rise of Character in the Human Face," this collection of busts shows Osborn's conception of human ancestry. Although debate continues about the possible contribution of Neanderthal DNA to that of modern humans, Neanderthals are no longer regarded as direct ancestors. Yet Osborn's inclusion of the Neanderthal as a direct ancestor is dwarfed by another gaffe: the inclusion of Piltdown Man.



Eugenics triangle of life

Year: c. 1930
Originally appeared in: Traveling exhibit on eugenics
Now appears in: Better for All the World by Harry Bruinius
If people could breed better pigs, chickens and cows, they could certainly breed better children. Traveling exhibits in the first half of the 20th century showed the simple logic of heritage trumping education and environment. Ironically, some of the main thinkers behind the eugenics movement had troubles of their own. Harry Laughlin, who vigorously campaigned for the sterilization of the unfit, kept secret his own epilepsy. Of course, epilepsy in no way diminishes one's worth as a human being (unless, unfortunately, one is a eugenicist). Another thinker behind the movement, Charles Davenport, confidently predicted that his daughter would — like himself — respect the values of Protestant America, manage expenses responsibly, and prefer nature to art. His daughter turned out to be a bohemian spendthrift. Even worse, she was a bohemian spendthrift who defied her daddy and married a Jew.

Year: 1911
Scientist: Charles Davenport



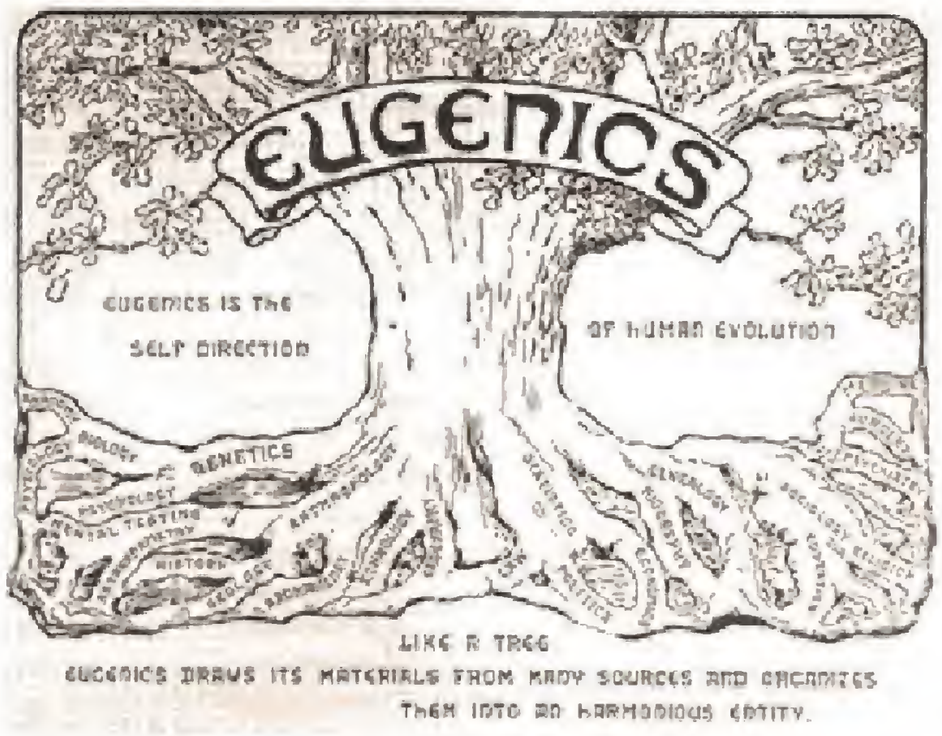
Heredity chart

Originally published in: Heredity in Relation to Eugenics

Now appears in: Davenport's Dream edited by Witkowski and Inglis

Eugenicist Charles Davenport believed that practically everything came down to inheritance: intelligence, artistic ability, wanderlust and good (or bad) morals. To support his argument, he published an abundance of inheritance diagrams showing the relationships between various defects. His caption for this one reads, "This mating illustrates the principle that migraine (M) and paralysis frequently indicate the presence of defective germ cells, as well as normal. In the central mating the paralytic father has an insane brother, an insane niece and 3 feeble-minded grandnephews, besides a grandniece, who died in convulsions." Besides M for migraine, Davenport employed these abbreviations: N for normal, A for alcoholic, E for epileptic, F for feeble-minded, I for insane, D inf. for died in infancy. Also written next to some boxes are apparently less serious traits: "neurotic" and "peculiar." When he produced these diagrams, Davenport likely didn't know that his trusted colleague, Harry Laughlin, suffered from epilepsy, a condition he tried to hide for many years. Eugenicists frequently found the condition grounds for forced sterilization.

Larger image available



Eugenics logo

Year: 1921

Originally published by: The Second International Eugenics Congress

Now appears in: Aristotle's Ladder, Darwin's Tree by J. David Archibald

Convening at the American Museum of Natural History, the Second International Eugenics Congress boasted an artfully designed logo. Even now, the Art Nouveau design holds a certain appeal, though the text is a little horrifying. Architects of the eugenics movement felt confident they could distinguish those worthy of breeding from the unfit. Eugenicists such as Charles Davenport imagined that a single gene might be responsible for intelligence. Nearly a century later, scientists aren't so sure. In September 2014, Nature News reported (http://www.nature.com/news/smart-genes-prove-elusive-1.15858) on a new study exploring the link between genes and intelligence, saying, "One of the largest, most rigorous genetic studies of human cognition has turned up inconclusive findings, and experts concede that they will probably need to scour the genomes of more than 1 million people to confidently identify even a small genetic influence on intelligence and other behavioural traits." Nature went on to explain that the authors of the newly published study had identified 69 genetic variants associated with education level, but found "those variants have about one-twentieth

the influence on intelligence as do gene variants linked to other complex traits such as height." In other words, nearly a century of additional research left scientists less sure, not more sure, of which genes affect intelligence and behavior. As for the "harmonious entity" of the 1921 eugenics tree, the artist omitted a few ingredients from its sturdy roots, namely big doses of racial, ethnic, religious, and class biases.
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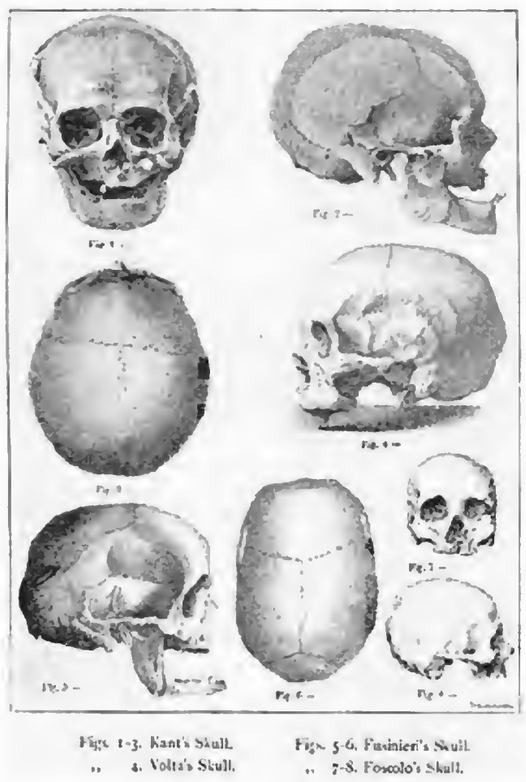
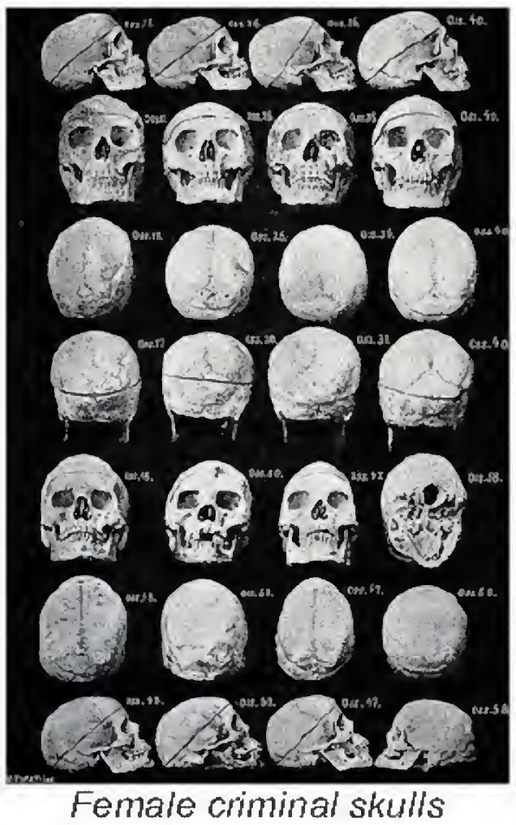


Genius skulls

Year: 1896
Scientist: Cesare Lombroso
Originally published in: The Man of Genius
Italian anthropologist Cesare Lombroso gained fame for, among other things, alleging that genius was a form of retrograde evolution, and that madness was how biology coped with that genius. Lombroso also asserted that some people are born delinquent, and society should save itself from these hopeless cases by any means necessary. (Lombroso tried convincing Leo Tolstoy of this. Nonplussed, Tolstoy wrote Resurrection to refute the notion.) Besides believing in genius-madness links and born criminals, Lombroso was sure mental attributes could be determined from the appearance of the brain and even the skull. Here he showed some skulls of geniuses, including Volta and Foscolo (inordinately tall) and Kant (exceptional cranial capacity). Given the chance to examine the brain of a contemporary, Carlo Giacomini (who had collected evidence contradicting Lombroso's theory), Lombroso declared victory when he found Giacomini's preserved brain sported a rare feature, a double Rolando sulcus.


Female criminal skulls

Year: 1897
Scientist: Cesare Lombroso
Originally published in: L'uomo delinquente in rapporto all'antropologia, alla giurisprudenza ed alla psichiatria
Image provided by: El Bibliomata (some rights reserved)
Lombroso didn't consider the fairer sex too fair for scrutiny when it came to delinquency. He was sure the female skull could shed as much light on criminal behavior as the male skull. This image, titled "Cranii di donne delinquenti italiane," presented a collection of skulls of female criminals whose deviance Lombroso believed he could identify in skull shape. Interestingly, the skulls shown in profile are all tilted backward rather than shown upright as they would be at the top of a living woman's neck. Maybe the skulls were portrayed this way simply because it was easier to rest them on a flat, level surface, but it was a practice frequently (if unconsciously) followed when showing the skulls of "savage" races.

Year: 1911
Scientists: Cesare Lombroso and G. Ferrero
Originally published in: "Applications de la nouvelle école au Nord de l'Amérique"

Criminals

Now appears in: The Mismeasure of Man by Stephen Jay Gould (Lombroso's work also discussed in "Turin's Criminology Museum" by Alison Abbott in Nature Magazine, January 21, 2010 issue)
Lombroso teamed up with colleague Ferrero to illustrate some unprepossessing facial features that identify born criminals. Unfortunately for many accused, the stigmata he described became "evidence" in their criminal trials. While he pushed for capital punishment for the worst "born criminals," Lombroso believed that other deviants had only some or only slightly troubling criminal characteristics — big ears, little heads, protruding brows — and they should simply be placed in asylums. His genetic-throwback explanation of criminality, genius and deviance was known as atavism.

Comparison

Year: 1586
Scientist: Giambattista Della Porta
Originally published in: De Humana Physiognomia
Now appears in: Astrology, Magic, and Alchemy in Art by Matilde Battistini, translated by Rosanna M. Giammanco Frongia
Della Porta was a respected naturalist and glittering playwright. Unfortunately, his reputation gave his misguided ideas a long life, including the notion that one's character could be inferred from one's face. He apparently considered this example obstinate.

Facial comparisons

Year: 1586
Scientist: Giambattista Della Porta
Originally published in: De Humana Physiognomia
Now appears at: Historical Anatomies on the Web (http://www.nlm.nih.gov/exhibition/historicalanatomies/porta_home.html)
In his De Humana Physiognomia Libri IIII, Della Porta produced plenty of examples of human-animal similarities, some less noble than others. Della Porta also believed in the doctrine of signatures, that plants resembling certain body parts could cure what ailed them.
Larger image available

Year: 1586
Scientist: Giambattista Della Porta
Originally published in: De Humana Physiognomia
Now appears at: Giambattista della Porta's De Humana Physiognomia Libri IIII in Public Domain Review
Here are two more examples of Della Porta's physiognomy — facial features shedding light on character — with animal counterparts. The human shown on the bottom might have been

Engravings

as well as profiles of a "native of Botany Bay" and an African.

Great Chain diagram

Year: 1617
Scientist/artist: Robert Fludd
Originally published as: The Great Chain of Being
Now appears in: "Science by the Eyeful" in Science and Robert Fludd and His Images of The Divine by Urszula Szulakowska in Public Domain Review
The Great Chain of Being didn't come into existence with Charles White's 1799 diagram. The concept dated back to the ancient Greeks. Persisting throughout the centuries, the great chain was a hierarchical structure of all matter and life, with God at the top and minerals at the bottom. Humans ranked above the other earthly life forms (though, as White's diagram shows, humans could also be ranked by race). At first glance, the Great Chain of Being might look like an early form of evolutionary theory, but it wasn't. The hierarchy wasn't only strict, it was static and, unlike evolution, precluded change. However the Great Chain of Being might have influenced how some early biologists thought about biological diversity, including "higher" and "lower" life forms. One of many people to document the great chain, Robert Fludd was an English physician who worked in the court of King James I. In his vision, the Goddess of Wisdom stands above all life forms on earth, just below the angels. In 2014, this diagram was among the oldest illustrations on display in the British Library's Beautiful Science exhibition highlighting science visualizations over the centuries.

Esau and satyr

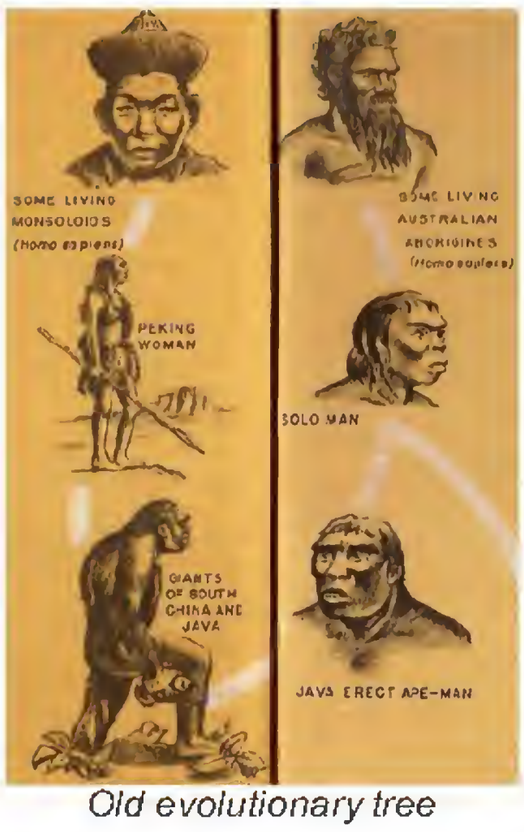
Year: 1731
Scientist/artist: Johann Jakob Scheuchzer
Originally published in: Sacred Physics
Now appears in: Crossing Over by Stephen Jay Gould and Rosamond Wolff Purcell
Swiss naturalist Johann Jakob Scheuchzer found the Old Testament a perfectly plausible account of the history of life on earth. But he also tried to reconcile the story with discoveries about the natural world, including the existence of apes. In this image, Scheuchzer compared biblical Esau (Jacob's inordinately hairy, slightly dim-witted older twin) with a "satyr" (the term at the time for chimpanzees). The 18th-century naturalist stopped short of calling the father of the Edomites an ape. "Nonetheless, in making this comparison, I do not wish to insinuate that Esau was a Satyr, nor that this race of savage animals has descended from him. I consider Esau as a monstrous *man*."
Larger image available

Facial comparisons

realistic, but the the human up top is surely an exaggeration. The belief that a person's facial features and body shape could illuminate his or her character goes back to the time of Ancient Greece. By Della Porta's day, physiognomy had become entwined with another popular pseudoscience: astrology. Some of the greatest astronomers of the Renaissance cast horoscopes for powerful patrons.

Four temperaments

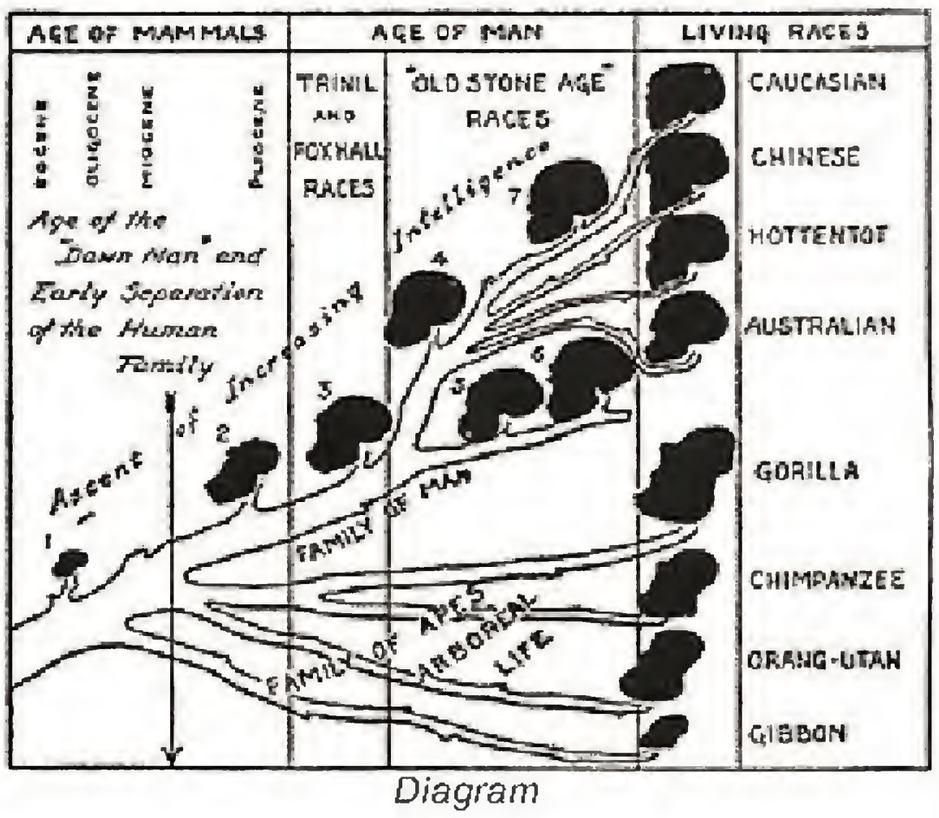
Century: Early 19th
Scientist: W. Johnson
Now appears in: Blood and Guts by Roy Porter
For centuries, doctors maintained that health and personality were determined by one's balance of four key bodily fluids: blood, phlegm, yellow bile and black bile. (Blech.) If you were sanguine, you were ruddy, lively, energetic and hard working, but maybe impulsive and something less than an intellectual giant. If you were phlegmatic, you were chubby and lazy. If you were choleric (with an excess of yellow bile), you might be thin, jaundiced, mean and stingy. If you were melancholic (with an excess of black bile) you were depressed. Paracelsus scorned this mind set in the 16th century, but it persisted anyway. This engraving showed examples of the different temperaments.
Larger image available



Old evolutionary tree

Year: 1945
Scientists: Franz Weidenreich and Roy Chapman Andrews
Artist: T.W. Voter
Originally published in: Meet Your Ancestors by Roy Chapman Andrews
In the mid-1940s, Roy Chapman Andrews wrote a book about paleoanthropology aimed at a popular audience, with "The Family Tree of Man" (only part of which appears here) on the inside cover. The book reflected the views of scientists Andrews truly admired, including Henry Fairfield Osborn and (especially) Franz Weidenreich. (Weidenreich's work led to the multiregional theory of human origins, arguing that modern human races evolved independently from Homo erectus with some gene flow in between.) To his credit, Andrews mentioned Africa's possible role as the cradle of humankind, and he expressed reservations about the Piltdown fossils. New finds in science, however, still couldn't override old feelings about race. Andrews summed up the issue with the example of radishes growing at different rates in different types of soil. So, he stated, "the progress of the different races was unequal." It shouldn't take much effort to guess which race Andrews considered the winner. The "giants" Andrews described belonged to the now-discredited

genus of Meganthropus and Gigantopithecus. Gigantopithecus is still considered a valid genus, and modern paleontologists surmise that it may actually have been as much as 10 feet tall, though it's not considered a human ancestor.



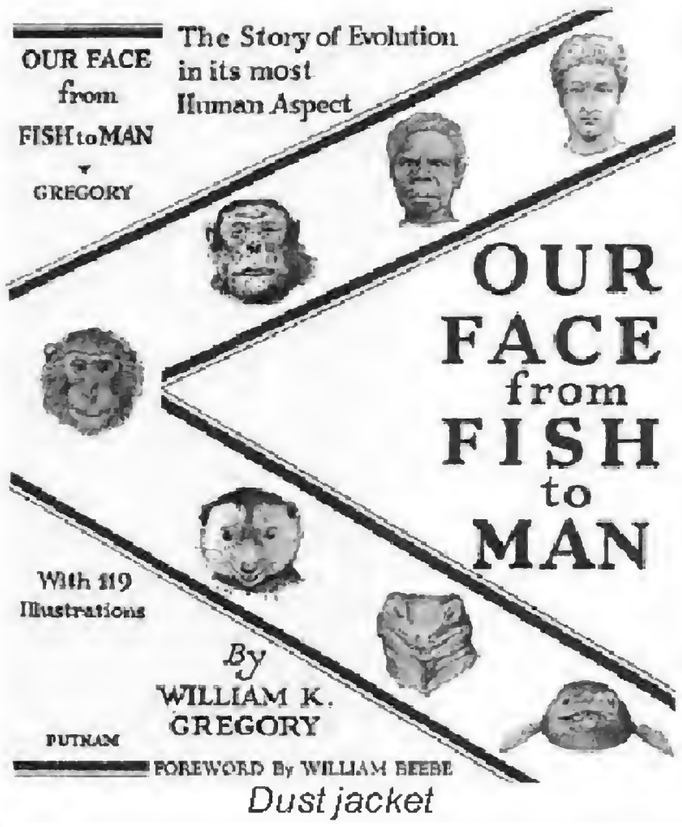
Diagram

Year: 1926
Scientist: Henry Fairfield Osborn
Originally published in: Evolution and Religion in Education
Now appears in: God — or Gorilla: Images of Evolution in the Jazz Age by Constance Areson Clark
In his biography published in 1940, W.E.B. Du Bois remarked, "I remember once in a museum, coming face to face with a demonstration: a series of skeletons arranged from a little monkey to a tall well-developed white man, with a Negro barely outranking a chimpanzee." Henry Fairfield Osborn of the American Museum of Natural History wielded enormous influence, not just at AMNH, but in other museums and in textbooks, which adapted AMNH material. A self-described opponent of "miscegenation," Osborn didn't think twice about which race was the very best. Notice the "Ascent of Increasing Intelligence."

Busts

Century: Early 20th
Appeared at: American Museum of Natural History
Now appears in: Darwin's Universe: Evolution from A to Z by Richard Milner
For many years, the American Museum of Natural History managed to combine the ladder-like view of evolution with obvious racism. Of course, humans belonged at the top of the ladder — just not all humans. In this assemblage of busts, the tippy-top spot is occupied by nothing less than a Greek god. Below the god, and below all people of European descent, is the sub-Saharan African. Milner writes, "By the 1960s, the outmoded embarrassment was trashed." Good riddance.
Larger image available

Year: 1929
Scientist: William King Gregory
Originally published in: Our Face from Fish to Man
Now appears in: God — or Gorilla: Images of Evolution in the Jazz Age by Constance Areson Clark
To see the ladder of evolution from fish to humans, you didn't have to visit the American Museum of Natural History; the same racism in a lab coat appeared on book covers, too. William King Gregory criticized his old mentor, Henry Fairfield Osborn, for "pithecophobia" —



Dust jacket

a fear of apes and monkeys in the human family tree. But Gregory (like many people) shared Osborn's views of race. This dust jacket includes six stylized faces and one real one. The Tasmanian face, apparently not quite human in Gregory's view, is from a 19th-century photograph of a woman who may have been the last remaining member of Tasmania's native population. Her name was Trucanini, and at the time her picture was taken, she was one of just five survivors in what could be termed an internment camp, established by the British. All of her companions were so ill that they would soon die. Trucanini died in 1876.

Narrative text and graphic design © by Michon Scott - Updated October 12, 2014

Flood witness

Year: 1731
Scientist/artist: Johann Jakob Scheuchzer
Originally published in: Sacred Physics
Now appears in: Fossils: Evidence of Vanished Worlds by Yvette Gayrard-Valy and Cradle of Life by J. William Schopf
"The reality of the Universal Deluge, albeit acknowledged for many centuries, has never been more patent than it is at the present time." So declared Scheuchzer in describing this specimen, which he named Homo diluvii testis. This "witness to the flood" was a 4-foot-long fossil with eyes that had apparently widened their sockets with horror at the rising waters. Decades later, Georges Cuvier reexamined and cleaned the fossil, and discovered its clawed forefeet. It wasn't a human witness to Noah's flood; it was a big, extinct salamander. The species was later renamed, in Scheuchzer 's dubious honor, Andrias scheuchzeri.
Larger image available

Flood witness

Year: c. 1765
Explorer: John Byron
Now appears in: Mr. Jefferson and the Giant Moose by Lee Alan Dugatkin
An 18th-century misconception about the New World was that cold, damp conditions there stunted its inhabitants. The French naturalist Buffon long embraced this idea, but he wasn't alone. Cornelius de Pauw, son of a director of the Dutch West Indies Company, also insisted that the New World was cold and its people and animals were scrawny. Arguing against Buffon and de Pauw was Thomas Jefferson, who assembled physical specimens of big American animals. Also arguing against them was a French Benedictine monk named Antoine-Joseph Pernety, who revived a legend dating back to the 16th century. In 1520, Antonio Pigafetta, an Italian explorer accompanying Ferdinand Magellan, wrote of a Patagonian giant taken onboard the ship. This tall tale got an 18th-century reinforcement from the British admiral John Byron who commanded the Dolphin. He claimed to have met a 7-foot-tall Patagonian chief, and further claimed that few of the other men in the tribe were shorter. The alleged meeting is depicted here. Byron's story gained traction during the 1760s, with some outlets describing the Patagonians' height at 8 or 9 feet, but de Pauw rejected the story as fabulous, writing, "some living proofs of their existence would certainly have been brought to Europe: or, at least, their skeletons." De Pauw went on for 30 more pages refuting the Patagonian giant claim. This might have made sense except that the Amsterdam native never bothered to gather physical evidence of anything he wrote about the New World, not even for his assertion that Native American mothers molded their babies' heads into conical or square shapes. He also wrote that Western Hemisphere frogs weighed as much as 37 pounds. That might have been interpreted as an argument against New World puniness but de Pauw insisted that giant frogs were a further sign of degeneracy since frogs are icky.

Years: 1839-1849, 1977-1996

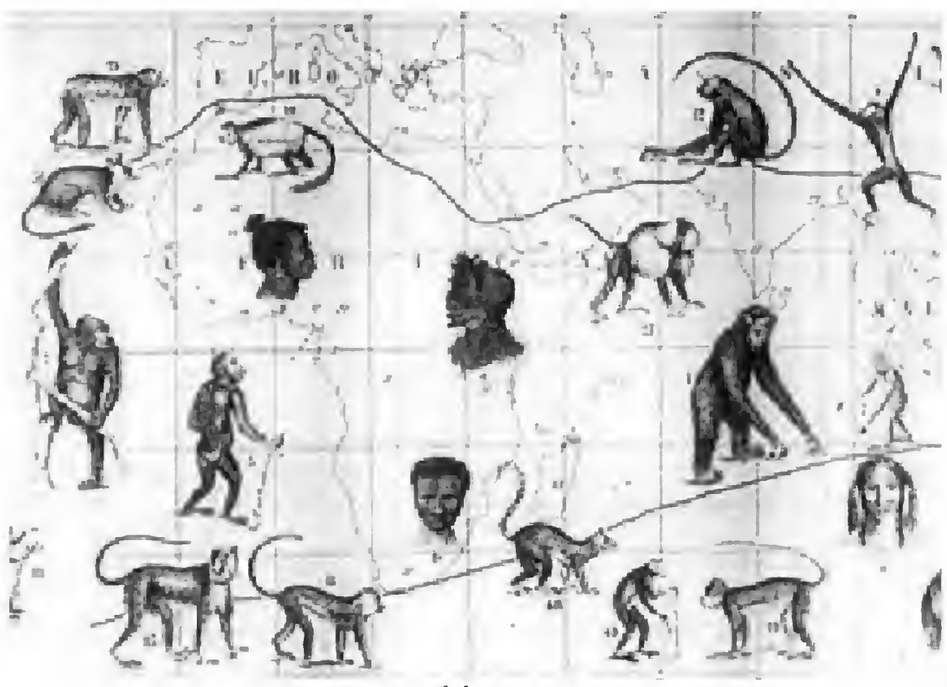
Skull

Scientists: Samuel George Morton, Stephen Jay Gould
Artist: John Collins
Originally published in: Crania Americana
Now appears in: "The Mismeasure of Science: Stephen Jay Gould versus Samuel George Morton on Skulls and Bias" by Lewis et al. in PLoS Biology
In the mid-19th century, Morton measured hundreds of skulls from different ethnic groups to determine differences in cranial capacity, initially using mustard seed and later, on a more diverse sample, lead shot. In the late 20th century, Gould reanalyzed Morton's results and found them lacking, as he explained in The Mismeasure of Man. Gould did not accuse Morton of deliberately falsifying his results, and pointed out that Morton published his raw data, something he wouldn't have done if he felt he had anything to hide. But Morton's conclusions that Caucasians consistently came out on top, plus changes in some skull measurements between the seed-based and shot-based studies, led Gould to conclude that Morton's assumptions about race subconsciously influenced his results. Gould did not actually re-measure Morton's skulls, but in the early 21st century, a group of anthropologists did — at least some of them. They found that Morton, whom Gould made the poster boy of a priori assumptions, had actually done a reasonably accurate job. The errors he did make were mostly random, and the skulls he consistently inflated were Egyptian, people he would have classified as Negro. Ironically, Gould's findings on cranial capacity were actually closer to the assumptions he presumed Morton made than were Morton's own findings. The 2011 study concluded that Gould's criticisms of Morton were at best poorly substantiated and at worst false. Morton's study did include errors, and he apparently held views that typified the racism of the time, but the 2011 researchers concluded, "Biased scientists are inevitable, biased results are not." A Nature editorial the following week observed, "Of course, Lewis and his colleagues have their own motivations. Several in the group have an association with the University of Pennsylvania, and have an interest in seeing the valuable but understudied skull collection freed from the stigma of bias (although, as for many 19th-century museum collections, its ethically dubious assembly will remain an issue)."

Caricatures

Year: 1854
Scientists: Josiah Nott and George Gliddon
Originally published in: Types of Mankind
Now available at: Types of Mankind (http://books.google.com/books?id=9osXAAAAYAAJ&source=gbs_navlinks_s)
Fondly dedicated to the memory of craniometry founder Samuel Morton, Nott and Gliddon's

book promoted polygenism — the idea that human races had been created separately, were unrelated to each other and were emphatically unequal. Nott and Gliddon devoted a considerable chunk of their 700+-page book to arguing that African slaves deserved their lowly position. Naturally the book was a big hit in the antebellum South. Opposed to both shared ancestry of all humans and (presumably) the Emancipation Proclamation, Nott and Gliddon wrote, "To one living in, or conversant with, the Slave-States of North America, it need not be told, that the Negroes, in ten generations, have not made the slightest physical approach either towards our aboriginal population, or to any other race. As a mnemonic, we here subjoin, sketched by a friend, the likenesses of two Negroes (Figs. 179, 180) who ply their avocations every day in the streets of Mobile where anybody could in a single morning collect a hundred other quite as strongly marked. . . . Mr. Lyell, in common with tourists less eminent, but in this question not less misinformed, has somewhere stated, that the Negroes in America are undergoing a manifest improvement in this physical type. He has no doubt that they will, in time, show a development in skull and intellect quite equal to the whites. This unscientific assertion is disproved by the cranial measurements of Dr. Morton." And how could Nott and Gliddon be sure that sub-Saharan Africans were unchanging? Because of biblical chronology. "The authors confidently trust, that the antiquity of Negro races, no less than the *permanence of Negro types,* during the (1853+2348) 4201 years that have just elapsed since Usher's Flood, are questions now satisfactorily set at rest in the minds of lettered and scientific readers." Furthermore, ancient Egyptians had enslaved sub-Saharan Africans, which justified continuing the practice, Nott and Gliddon argued. And slaves didn't have it so bad. "For the sake of illustrating that, even in Ancient Egypt, *African slavery* was not altogether unmitigated by moments of congenial enjoyment; not always inseparable from the lash and the hand-cuff; we submit a copy of some Negroes 'Dancing in the streets of Thebes', by way of archaeological evidence that, 8400 years ago; (or before the Exodus of Israel, B.C. 1822), 'de same ole Nigger' of our Southern plantations could spend his Nilotic sabbaths in saltatory recreations, and 'Turn about, and wheel about, and *jump Jim Crow!*'" Wow.



Map

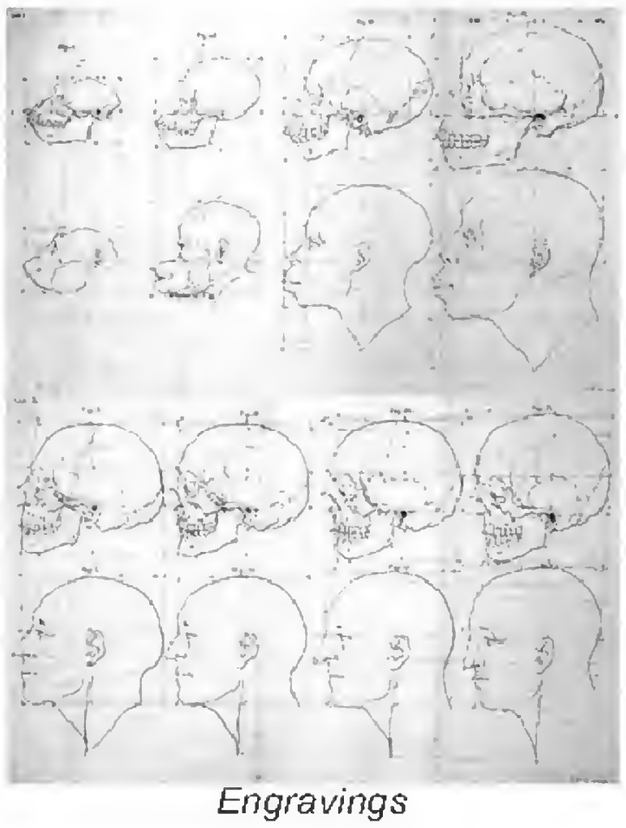
Year: 1857
Scientist: George R. Gliddon
Originally published in: Indigenous Races of the Earth
Now appears in: "The Moral Discourse of Climate: Historical Considerations on Race, Place and Virtue" by David Livingstone in Journal of Historical Geography
Gliddon was a practitioner of anthropometric cartography, and he argued that climate drove character. This image is part of a diagram he included in his book, "Chart illustrative of the geographical distribution of monkeys in their relation to that of some inferior types of men." Besides arguing that no civilization had ever arisen where black people lived, he went on to say, "the most superior types of Monkeys are found to be indigenous exactly where we encounter races of some of the most inferior types of Men." Many of Gliddon's contemporaries agreed with him (Alexander von Humboldt being a notable exception). The

reasoning went like this: People living in temperate climates were fashioned by nature to be smart, hardworking, upright citizens. People who lived in the tropics were slackers, and pretty loose slackers at that. You would think, considering the presumed relationship between cold and character, that people living in or near the Arctic would be overachievers, but no. Somehow they were slackers, too. As for whether the races shared a common origin, convictions varied. Gliddon believed in multiple origins, but others argued that we all arose from common stock, only some races improved over time, and the races that headed south (or too far north) degenerated.

Shootout with gorilla

Year: 1895
Scientist: Paul Du Chaillu
Originally published in: Stories of the Gorilla Country
Now appears in: "Race, Sex and the Trials of a Young Explorer" by Richard Conniff in The New York Times (http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/02/13/race-sex-and-the-trials-a-young-explorer/)
In the mid-19th century, an intrepid young explorer named Paul Du Chaillu ventured into the jungles of Gabon. In the four years he spent there, he encountered gorillas, and brought back some 20 specimens. They arrived on the scientific scene about the time that Darwin and Wallace introduced the theory of natural selection. Gorillas are certainly big and strong, but Du Chaillu depicted the gorilla as a "hellish dream creature." In writing about his African expedition, he also embellished accounts of his travels, and may even have plagiarized the works of others. Yet Du Chaillu's reputation tanked not so much for what he wrote about Africa as for his alleged relationship to it. Whispers circulated that amateur naturalist wasn't entirely white. The Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia sponsored Du Chaillu's trip, and science historian Richard Conniff argues that the same academy might have kicked Du Chaillu out in 1860 at least in part because an academy officer named George Ord fretted over the shape of the naturalist's head and facial features. In short, Ord wrote, he discerned "evidence of spurious origin." Du Chaillu's father was a slave owner and his mother was probably mixed race — something Ord blamed for Du Chaillu's overly dramatic accounts of his travels. "If it be a fact that he is a mongrel, or a *mustee,* as the mixed races are termed in the West Indies, then we may account for his wondrous narratives; for I have observed that it is a characteristic of the negro race, and their admixtures, to be affected to habits of romance."

Year: 1794
Scientist/artist: Pieter Camper
Originally published in: The Works of the Late Professor Camper
Now appears in: Science: A Four Thousand Year History by Patricia Fara
It's far from obvious, but this image was actually intended to show that differences between races were superficial. Dutch anatomist Camper was an abolitionist. The faces appear along a spectrum that measures the angle at which the face slopes backward — from apes to Apollo. Although the grid lines lend an air of mathematical finality, the scale is really one of



Engravings

aesthetics, with the unlikely pinnacle of a Greek god. Although aimed at minimizing the perceived differences between races, this diagram apparently had the opposite effect.

Engravings

Year: 1795
Scientist/artist: J.F. Blumenbach
Originally published in: De generis humani varietate nativa
Now appears in: I Have Landed by Stephen Jay Gould

Pieter Camper wasn't the only well-intentioned 18th-century naturalist whose work had the opposite effect of what he hoped. Although he probably assumed (as did everyone he knew) that Europeans outshone everybody else, Blumenbach was an abolitionist who maintained that slaves' morality often surpassed that of their masters. (He especially admired the poetry of Phillis Wheatley, a Boston slave.) Moreover, Blumenbach argued forcefully that humans comprised a single species — hardly a view shared by many of his peers. But Blumenbach made a blunder with long-lasting effects. Whereas his role model Linnaeus had classified human races based on geography, Blumenbach classified them based on a purely subjective judgment: beauty. Blumenbach concluded that mankind arose — and the most beautiful people on earth continued to live — in the Caucasus (hence Caucasian). He figured that other races diverged from their ancestral types as they adapted to different environments. This illustration shows the "ideal" Caucasian skull in the middle. Moving toward the left are American Indian and Mongolian skulls. On the right are Malay and African skulls. Blumenbach's personal preference became, for many people, just more evidence of intellectual and moral superiority.

Kirkdale Cave

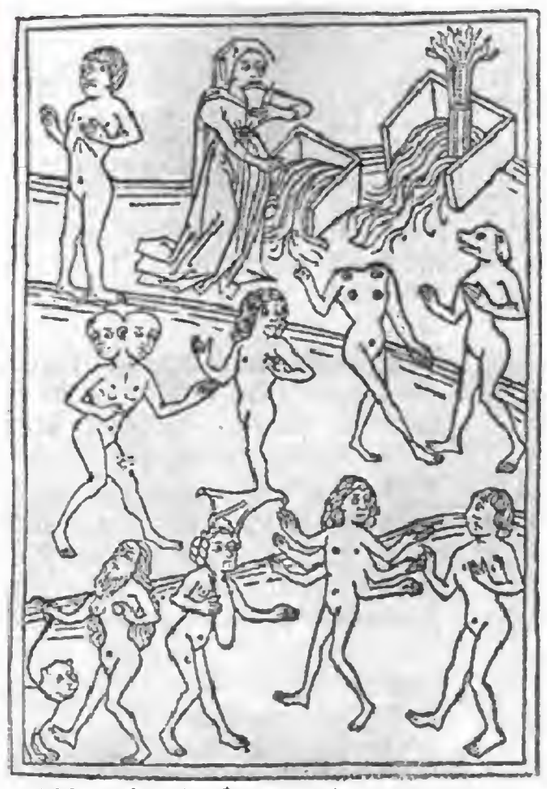
Year: 1822
Scientist/artist: William Buckland
Originally published in: Goat Hole Cave, Paviland
Now appears in: Homo Britannicus by Chris Stringer

William Buckland completed one of the first, if not the very first, reconstructions of living habits when he examined fossil hyena remains in Kirkdale Cave. About the same time, he discovered an ancient human skeleton: a Cro-Magnon fossil at Goat Hole Cave. Buckland produced detailed diagrams of the cave and noted that the skeleton was covered with red ochre, possibly the result of a burial ceremony. Buckland probably had no way of knowing how ancient or significant his find was. He also had no great means of determining the individual's gender. He described the ancient human (perhaps jokingly) as a witch, then gave the more palatable name of "Red Lady of Paviland." The ochre-covered human was less-than-average height for a Cro-Magnon male fossil, at least compared to

other finds, and that might explain why Buckland misinterpreted the male fossil as female. Still, for such an early find, it wasn't a bad effort.
Larger image available

Human variations

Year: 1493
Originally published in: Nuremberg Chronicle
Now appears in: Amazing Rare Things by Attenborough, Owens, Clayton and Alexandratos
Europeans imagined all sorts of odd "people" lived elsewhere in the world: people with horns, with giant floppy ears, with giant single feet, to name a few. This late 15th-century publication shows a few of the odd humans assumed to live elsewhere. The bottom picture shows a human whose face appears on his or her torso. The middle picture is of a cyclops. The top picture is apparently of a werewolf crossed with a cheesy lounge singer.

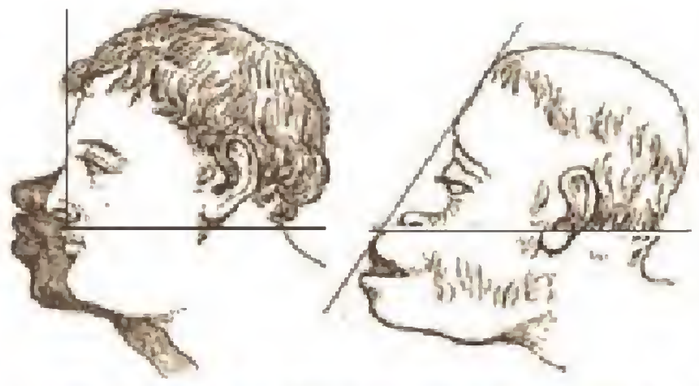

Woodcut of monstrous races

Year: 1475
Scientist/artist: Konrad von Megenberg
Originally published in: Book of Nature
Now appears in: "Marvels of the East: A Study in the History of Monsters" by Rudolf Wittkower in Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes, 1942
The notion that faraway lands — India in particular — held monstrous human races arose in Antiquity, when some Greek scholars spread fabulous accounts. The Greeks had their share of skeptics who challenged such stories, but while the skeptics' criticisms were lost to medieval Europeans, the fantastic tales lived on, thanks to the uncritical writings of Pliny and others. For all their belief in monstrous races, Europeans in the Middle Ages adopted a pretty generous stance about them, insisting that even the monstrous races were God's children. Monsters as portents of divine punishment may have been more common during the sectarian tensions of the Reformation.

Wonders of Creation

Century: 13th
Scientist/artist: Zakariya ibn Muhammad ibn Mahmud Abu Yahya al-Qazwini
Originally published in: Aja'ib al-Makhluqat
Now appears in: Science in Medieval Islam by Howard R. Turner
Just as Europeans had outlandish ideas of odd people who might live far away, Muslim scholars entertained equally fanciful notions. Published in what is today Iraq, this encyclopedia of the "Wonders of Creation" covered a range of topics, mixing fact and fiction about geography and biology.

Year: 1851
Scientist/artist: Robert Knox



[Profile of Negro, European, and Oran Outan.]
Skulls

Originally published in: The Races of Men
Now appears in: Making Modern Science by Bowler and Morus
If the work of Robert Knox was any indication, not much improved in race relations between the beginning and the middle of the 19th century. To Victorian minds, a sloping forehead implied and tiny brain, and Knox sure wanted his readers to get his point about people of color.

Depiction

Year: 1758
Scientist/artist: Carolus Linnaeus
Originally published in: Systema Naturae
Now appears in: Human Origins: The Search for Our Beginnings by Herbert Thomas
It's impossible to overestimate the contribution Linnaeus made to science — he developed the system for classifying all living organisms that is still in use today. Yet his uncertainty about how to classify apes and humans is obvious from some of his depictions. He even developed terms such as "day man" and "night man," and admitted that he couldn't find a characteristic to differentiate humans from apes.

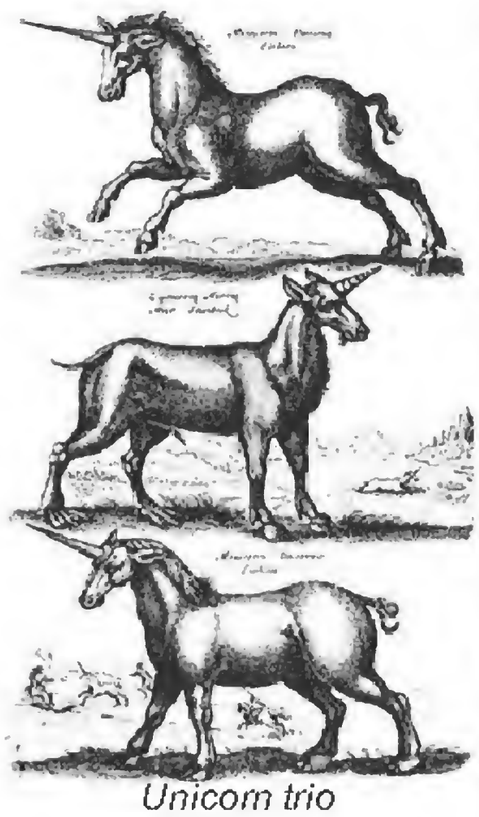
Arctopithecus

Year: 1658
Scientist: Edward Topsell
Originally published in: Historie of Foure-Footed Beastes
Now appears at: Topsell's Historie of Foure-Footed Beastes at the University of Houston Digital Library
This 17th-century depiction of a full-bodied beast with long claws and a human face might have looked like a human-hybrid monster to the people who read Topsell's book. It was then known as Arctopithecus (the bear-ape), a New World animal utterly foreign to Europeans. Today it seems a little more benign. It's a three-toed sloth.

Year: 1812
Scientist/artist: F. Jacob
Originally published in: Histoire Naturelle des Singes
Now appears in: Human Origins: The Search for Our Beginnings by Herbert Thomas
Jacob showed the fetus of a monkey and a human side by side to illustrate their similarities, maintaining that the only thing the monkey lacked was a soul.

Year: 1868
Scientist: Ernst Haeckel

Perhaps as long as 5,000 years ago, a group of sailors found skulls belonging to a race of hideous giants whom the ancient Greeks named cyclops. Dwelling in their mythical land, entrusting the fate of their crops to their evil gods and devouring any humans they could find, these creatures terrified generations of Europeans. Today, relatives of these monsters can still be found — roaming the African savannas or the Indian jungles, or even eating peanuts from the hands of small children in city zoos. In fact, the ancient Greek sailors found elephant skulls. What they mistook for single eye sockets were the nasal openings for the elephants' trunks. Over the centuries, our understanding of mammals, both living and extinct, has improved considerably. Just the same, scientists have made some mistakes.



Unicorn trio

Year: 1486
Artist: Erhard Reuwich
Originally published in: Perigrinationes ad Terram Sanctam
Now appears in: The Unicorn by Nancy Hathaway
Unicorn "sightings" occurred throughout the world, but the mythical creature wasn't the same in each description. Not all unicorns resembled white horses with ivory horns. The Chinese unicorn was cow-shaped and scaly, or horse-shaped but with a dragon's head. The Arabian version looked like a rhinoceros but with a more elaborate horn. Some unicorns looked like lions, some were as big as mountains, some were as small as dogs. Some sported turtle shells. Some had a combination of hooves and chicken feet. Gifted with good taste, some ate only sugarcane. This picture shows just three variations — fairly pedestrian versions compared to their exotic cousins.

Larger image available

Seal and impression

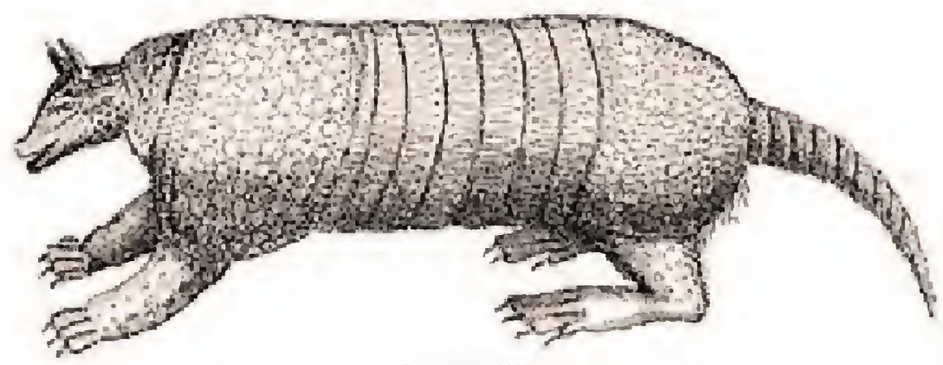
Year: c. 2600-1900 BC
Appears at: Stamp Seal and a Modern Impression: Unicorn or Bull and Inscription © The Metropolitan Museum of Art
Material discussed in: The Natural History of Unicorns by Chris Lavers
From the Metropolitan Museum of Art: "Stamp seals were used in antiquity as marks of ownership and badges of status. In the large urban centers of the Harappan civilization, hundreds of square-shaped stamp seals were found in excavations. They are engraved with images of wild or domestic animals, humans, fantastic creatures, and possibly divinities. The bull is the most popular animal motif on the Indus Valley glyptic art. In this example, the animal is rendered in the typical strict profile, standing before what might be an altar. Its shoulder is covered by a decorated quilt or harness in the shape of an upside-down heart pattern. Most of the square stamp seals have inscriptions along the top edge. The Indus script, invented around 2600 B.C., is yet to be fully deciphered."

Lupus Scythicus

Now appears at: NOAA Photo Library Treasures of the Library (http://www.photolib.noaa.gov/library/index.html)
This creature looks a bit like a lion with a baboon's nose and mane well-tamed by conditioner. "Lupus," however, suggests that it's a wolf. "Scythicus" suggests it's from Scythia. A massive steppe that stretched from the northern shores of the Black Sea, past the Caspian Sea, to the mountains around the Taklimakan Desert, Scythia was populated during Antiquity by an equestrian society, which Herodotus described in his Histories. Archaeological finds have shed light on this ancient society, but even during the Baroque period in which Caspar Schott worked, Scythia was likely characterized simply as an exotic, far-off land with weird people and animals. No wonder a Scythian wolf might look feline.
Larger image available

Mammals

Year: 1662
Scientist: Caspar Schott
Originally published in: Physica Curiosa
Now appears at: NOAA Photo Library Treasures of the Library (http://www.photolib.noaa.gov/library/index.html)
Two more creatures from Schott's menagerie included a martin (below) and a surprisingly long-nosed ferret (above). Despite the canine look to the ferret nose, Schott captured the animal's short legs and slinky body admirably.
Larger image available

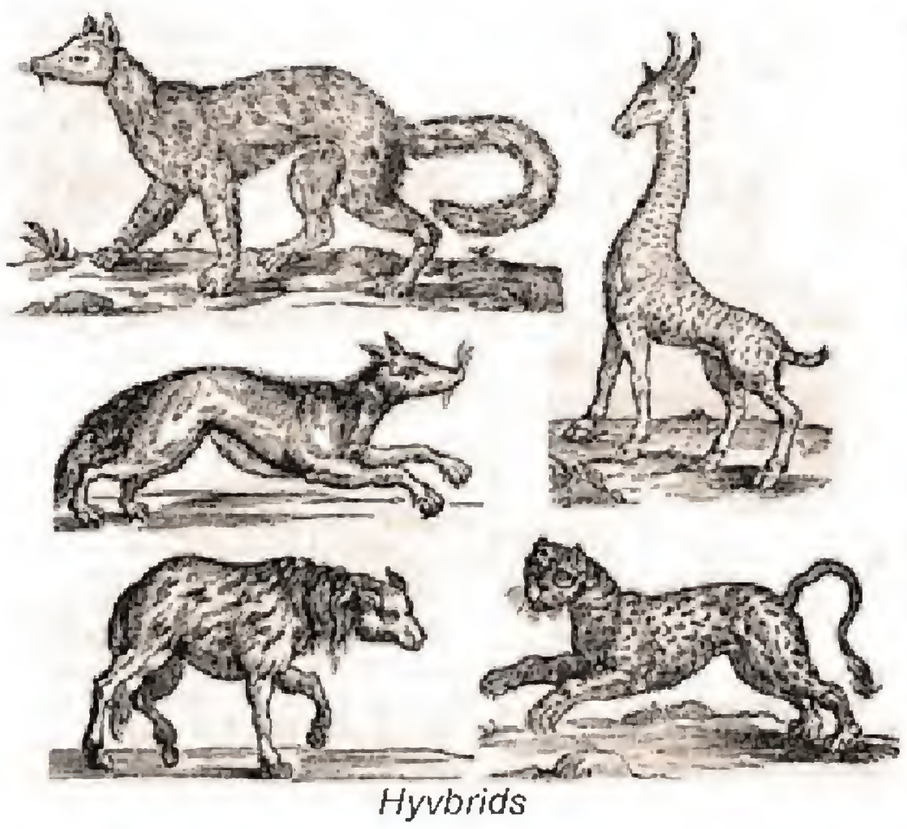


Armadillo

Year: 1709
Scientists/artists: Athanasius Kircher and Filippo Buonanni
Originally appeared in: Musæum Kircherianum
Now appears in: The Ecstatic Journey by Ingrid D. Rowland
Although its head is a little small, this armadillo is pretty recognizable. What's more intriguing about this depiction is the explanation for the animal's strange appearance. Jesuit scholar Kircher devoted considerable time and energy to discussing the logistics of Noah's Ark, but by the time Kircher composed his various works, the discovery of the New World had presented a serious problem. So many previously unknown creatures threatened to sink Noah's boat. Kircher found a few workarounds: spontaneous generation for lowly creatures like bugs, adaptation for creatures ending up in strange environments, and hybrids. The armadillo, Kircher supposed, was a cross between turtle and a porcupine or hedgehog.

Horned mammal

Year: 1675
Scientist/artist: Athanasius Kircher
Published in: Arca Noë
Now appears in: Athanasius Kircher's Theatre of the World by Joscelyn Godwin
Kircher wrote an entire book about Noah's Ark, and devoted Arca Noë to Spain's King Charles II, still a boy at the time of publication. Kircher fretted over growing skepticism about biblical narratives, including understandable doubts about whether Noah's Ark could have carried all the animals needed to repopulate the world. Kircher delved into the floorplan of the ark, even leaving room for chickens to feed the carnivores. But he also maintained that some species were not passengers on the ark; instead, they were hybrids. Whether Kircher believed this quadruped with a long horn on its snout to be one of those hybrids is hard to say.



Hyvbrids

Year: 1675
Scientist/artist: Athanasius Kircher
Published in: Arca Noë
Now appears in: Athanasius Kircher's Theatre of the World by Joscelyn Godwin
Kircher didn't doubt that different species could produce offspring, and his certainty helped get around the sticky problem of limited space on the ark. He gave numerous examples of animals that arose after the biblical flood receded. Besides the well-known example of the mule, he offered: Tragelaphus or Hirocervus from a goat and stag, Hippelaphus or Equicervus from a horse and stag, leopard from a lion and panther, Cameleopardalis (giraffe) from a camel and panther, Hippardium from a horse and panther, marmot from a squirrel and marten, Leocrocuta from a lion and hyena, Allopecopithicum from a fox and monkey (whose happy pairing frankly beggars belief), and the Chiurcha whose pedigree was fuzzy. Arca Noë featured woodcuts of many of his proposed hybrids.
Expanded image available

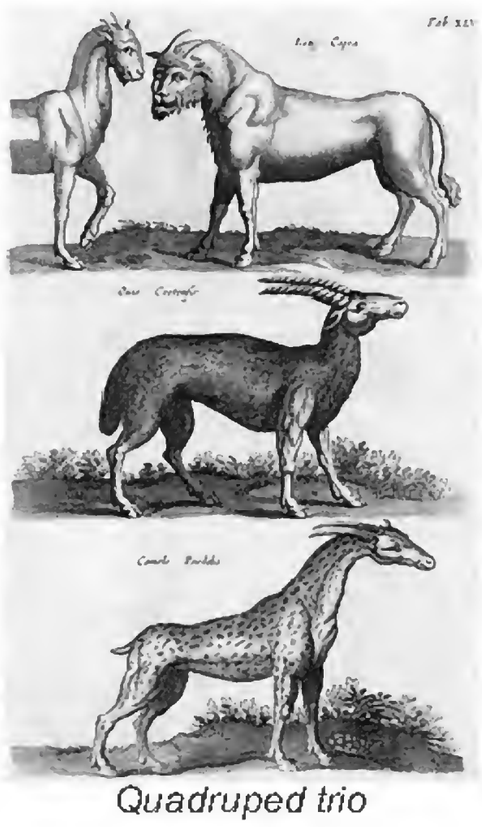
Year: 1641-1654
Scientist/artist: Athanasius Kircher
Published in: Magnes sive De Arte Magnetica
Now appears in: Athanasius Kircher's Theatre of the World by Joscelyn Godwin
In the faraway land of Tartary, so the legend said, grew a lamb plant. Although he published a picture, Kircher didn't buy the legend. He did, however, find another plant-animal hybrid plausible: the barnacle goose. He argued that some waterfowl drop their eggs into the sea, waves churn the eggs into froth, and the resulting barnacles eventually cling to boats.

Year: 1661

Lamb plant

Madagascar mammals

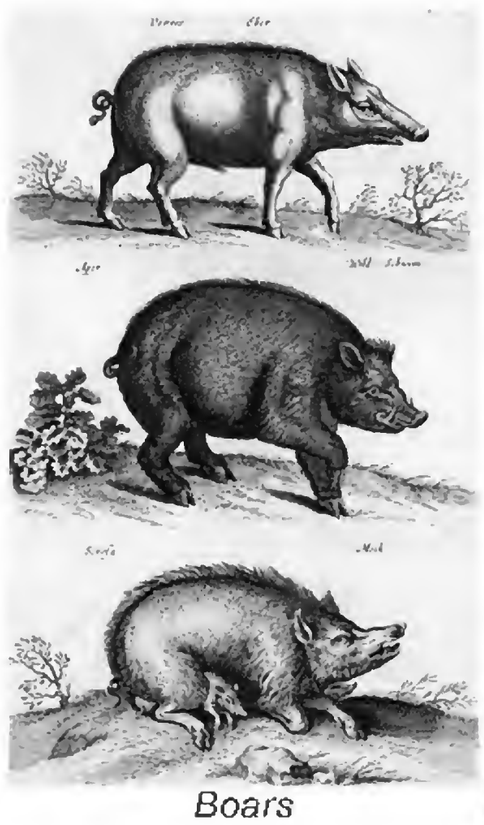
Scientist/artist: Étienne de Flacourt
Published in: History of the Great Island of Madagascar
Now appears in: Natural Histories edited by Tom Baione
The French East India company appointed Étienne de Flacourt governor of Madagascar in 1648, and charged him with ensuring good trade relations with the locals. That effort didn't turn out well, and Flacourt soon found he had better relations with the local wildlife. Even if the animals didn't reciprocate his affection, they didn't resent him as much as the people did. He documented animals partly or completely unfamiliar to Europeans with varying degrees of accuracy. The top animal shown here is the pygmy hippo, Hippopotamus madagascariensis. Flacourt's rendition has an overall bodily shape more like a dog's, but comparing his picture to the living, breathing animal is impossible now as Hippopotamus madagascariensis is extinct. Appearing next to the fish is likely an imperfectly depicted marine mammal.



Quadruped trio

Year: 1678
Scientist: Joannes Jonstonus
Originally published in: A Description of the Nature of Four-Footed Beasts with their Figures Engraven in Brass
Now appears at: University of Wisconsin Digital Collections (http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/HistSciTech/HistSciTech-idx?type=header&id=HistSciTech.Jonstonus)
In the mid-17th century, the famed printer Matthäus Merian the Elder published a five-volume natural history of animals by the physician Joannes Jonstonus (John Jonston). The book copied illustrations by other naturalists, and repeated hearsay about the serpents, dragons and human-headed beasts pictured. Merian the Elder's daughter, Maria Sibylla Merian, later copied some of the illustrations to hone her own artistic skills. Maria — who would go on to become a printer in her own right, and a naturalist of considerable ability — would resolve to paint plants and animals "from life," and would travel to the jungles of Surinam to study caterpillars. Her studiousness would mark a significant departure from the naturalist whose work her father published. The creatures shown here, from a later Jonstonus work published in England, include a human-faced "Lea Capra" (top), and a leopard-spotted, horned, sweet-faced "Camelo Pardalis" (bottom).
Larger image available

Year: 1678
Scientist: Joannes Jonstonus
Originally published in: A Description of the Nature of Four-Footed Beasts with their Figures



Boars

Engraven in Brass
Now appears at: University of Wisconsin Digital Collections (http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/HistSciTech/HistSciTech-idx?type=header&id=HistSciTech.Jonstonus)
Three more creatures from Jonstonus's menagerie are boars, animals more familiar to Jonstonus and his fellow Europeans. All three boars look menacing, which they probably really were. The bottom boar, looking after babies, looks particularly ready to take on two-legged troublemakers.
Larger image available

Raining rats

Year: 1680
Scientist: Erasmus Francisci
Originally published in: Der Wunder-reiche Uberzug [sic] unserer Nider-Welt
Now appears at: NOAA Photo Library Treasures of the Library
(http://www.photolib.noaa.gov/library/index.html)
If the weather can rain cats and dogs, it can probably also rain rats. At least this depiction of rodents raining down upon a horrified farmer suggests the possibility. Believe it or not, powerful winds in a hurricane or tornado can lift animals (as well as trees and houses) off the ground and drop them elsewhere. Tornadoes forming over water may be able to loft fish into the air, simply to be deposited elsewhere later. Where a tornado would find so many rats, however, is hard to say. A much more plausible explanation for a 17th-century rat storm probably includes exaggeration if not fabrication.
Larger image available

Sloth

Year: 1788
Scientists: Juan-Bautista Bru and Georges Cuvier
Originally published in: Squelette trouvé au Paraguay (Reprinted in Ossemens Fossiles in 1812)
Now appears in: Fossils: Evidence of Vanished Worlds by Yvette Gayrard-Valy and Scenes from Deep Time: Early Pictorial Representations of the Prehistoric World by Martin J.S. Rudwick
This was one of the first fossil articulations in the world (using bones from one animal, that is), and it was, in fact, not a bad job. Shortly after this elephant-sized skeleton was unearthed, it was mounted in a position suggestive of a giant sloth, and Cuvier

classified it in the same order. Although Cuvier recognized that the world had once been inhabited by animals quite different from those still living, he did not recognize that they evolved. Mummified ibises from Egypt, looking like those still living, convinced Cuvier that organisms didn't change.

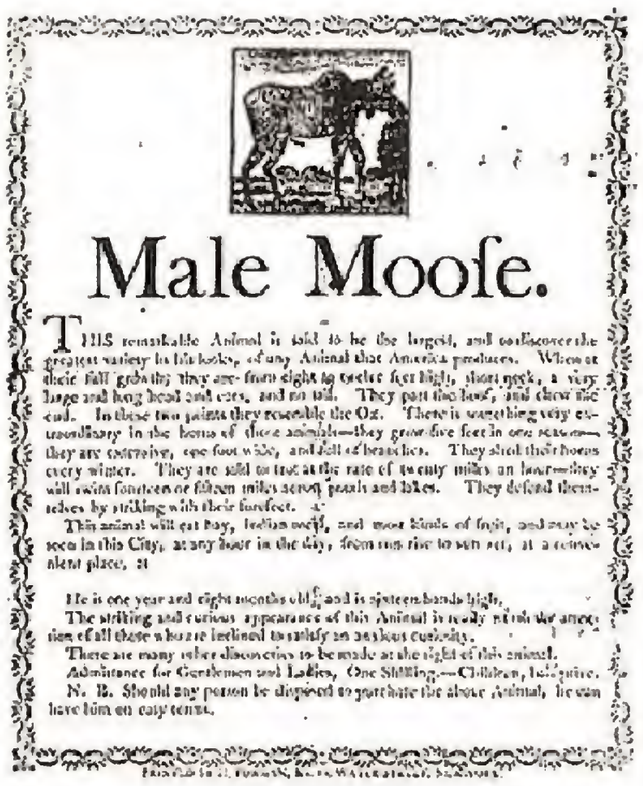
Great Claw

Year: 1799
Scientist: Thomas Jefferson
Originally described in: "A Memoir on the Discovery of Certain Bones of a Quadruped of the Clawed Kind in the Western Parts of Virginia" in the Transactions of the American Philosophical Society
Now appears in: Jefferson and Science by Silvio Bedini

Thomas Jefferson and Georges Buffon were freethinkers with a genius for scientific research, but in the late 18th century, they disagreed. Buffon convinced himself that "a niggardly sky and an unprolific land" in the New World left its human and animal inhabitants measly. Jefferson begged to differ, and marshaled all the evidence he could. In the case of the animal he dubbed Megalonyx or "Great Claw," he overreached. Jefferson described fossil bones discovered in western Virginia, identifying a femur fragment, radius, ulna and three claws. He claimed that the bones likely belonged to a lion, and with apparent glee pointed to Buffon's own measurements of "a large lion of Africa" to support his argument. Calculating the animal's overall size from bone fragments (not as unreasonable as it might sound — so long as the animal is correctly identified), Jefferson proclaimed, "Let us only say then, what we may safely say, that he was *more* than three times as large as the lion." Remains of such a big beast no longer roaming the Virginia countryside raised the question of where the animal now lived. He had a handy explanation: "Our entire ignorance of the immense country to the West and North-West, and of its contents, does not authorise us to say what it does not contain." (Jefferson didn't much care for the concept of extinction.) But before his paper was published, he received some surprising and perhaps disappointing news, and hastily revised his paper. The skeleton of a big quadruped had been dug up in Paraguay. "The megatherium is not of the cat form, as are the lion, tyger, and panther . . . it probably was not carnivorous, had not the phosphoric eye, nor leonine roar." The anatomist Caspar Wistar eventually named Jefferson's bones Megalonyx jeffersonii.

Jefferson was wrong about Great Claw, but Buffon was wrong about New World animals. The Paraguay animal wasn't a big cat but it was indeed big; it was a giant ground sloth. And any lingering skepticism about the size and ferocity of New World animals would have died in the claws and jaws of grizzlies encountered by Lewis and Clark and Company in the early 19th century. In fact Jefferson's 1799 paper attempted to advance an argument he had largely already won. Buffon died in 1788, and before his death he conceded Jefferson's point that American wildlife could be as big and robust as European wildlife. Buffon pledged to amend Natural History but died before he got around to it.

Year: 1798
Scientists: Thomas Jefferson and Georges Buffon



Giant moose

Originally described in: Advertisement
Now appears in: Mr. Jefferson and the Giant Moose by Lee Alan Dugatkin
Thomas Jefferson worked doggedly for years to refute the French naturalist Georges Buffon's conviction that New World inhabitants were scrawny. Jefferson eventually succeeded by marshalling multiple lines of evidence. American rocks yielded plenty of fossils of big animals, but they were long dead — extinct, in fact, though Jefferson hated the idea. His disdain for extinction aside, Jefferson wanted a specimen that lived during his own day, and perhaps his prize specimen was a moose, acquired for him by a Revolutionary War General John Sullivan. Notified of the moose find, Jefferson assured Buffon that a European reindeer could walk under the belly of his American moose. One likes to think Jefferson said the reindeer could do so without leaving so much as a scratch. He followed up the assurance with the physical specimen. Printed in New York, this broadside appeared years later. The overall look of this moose is accurate, but the ad boasts that the moose might be as much as 12 feet high. Considering the moose Jefferson relayed to Buffon was measured at 7 feet tall, this claim is likely exaggerated. Then again, it is an advertisement.

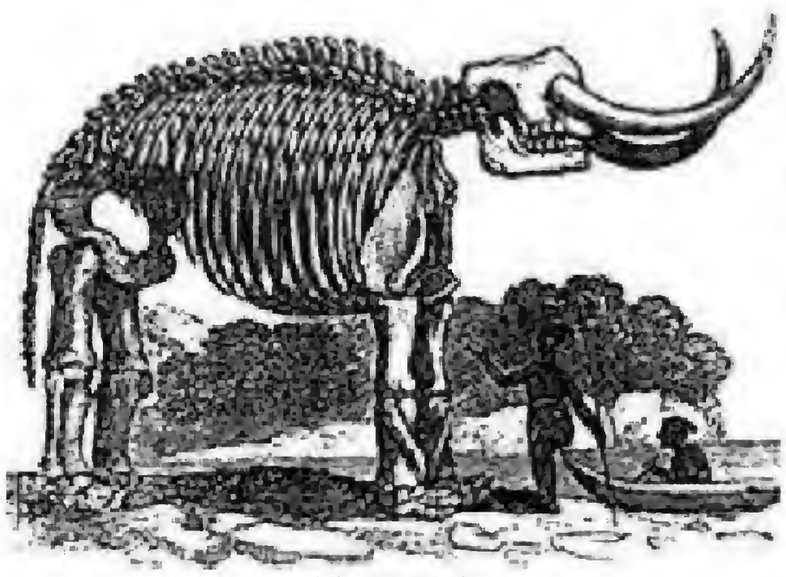
Confrontation

Year: 1733
Scientist: William Cheselden
Artists: Gerard Vandergucht and Jacob Schijnvoet
Originally published in: Osteographia
Now appears in: Accuracy and Elegance in Cheselden's Osteographia by Monique Kornell in Public Domain Review
This is not a goof. In fact, it's a meticulous depiction of skeletal anatomy, and it was part of a book loaded with such examples of accuracy, artistry and charming weirdness. Many of the illustrations in Osteographia, or Anatomy of the Bones, appeared inside ornate engraved frames. Perhaps more importantly, Cheselden strove to show the animals in lifelike poses and realistic settings. It doesn't take a degree in osteology to figure out which two domestic animals miss their fur and confront each other here. In aiming for the greatest possible accuracy, Cheselden dropped the original sketches made for the work and instead ordered Vandergucht and Schijnvoet use the camera obscura. Unfortunately the book was a financial failure when it was published in the 18th century. It has since achieved something closer to the respect it deserves.

Century: 12th
Photographed in: Belur, India by mojosaurus (some rights reserved)
Discussed in: The First Fossil Hunters by Adrienne Mayor and "Fossil Folklore from India: The Siwalik Hills and the Mahâbhârata" by Alexandra van der Geer, Michael Dermitzakis and John de Vos in Folklore
Temple sculptures in Belur commemorate the Indian epic Mahâbhârata, including an apocalyptic battle that left scores of elephants dead and dismembered. Bheema (or Bhima), a

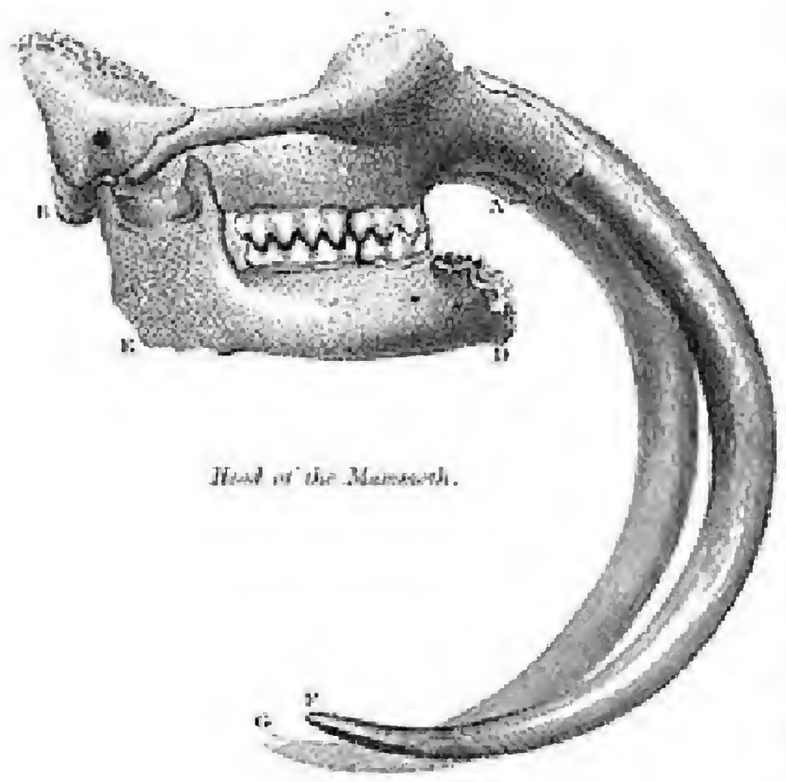
Defeated elephants

mythic figure in the epic, was reputed to have the strength of 1,000 elephants. So it was little trouble for him to kill the powerful animals and toss their bodies into a heap, and such hapless elephants appear in this wall sculpture. In fact, the epic battle myth might have been inspired by real fossil remains in the Siwalik Hills. The Siwalik Hills extend from northern Pakistan across northwestern India, Nepal, and northeastern India, ending in Bhutan. In the 19th century, spurred by mythical tales about the region, paleontologist Hugh Falconer started excavating. In a single day, he managed to collect more than 300 big bones. By the time he was done digging, he had unearthed literal tons of fossils, including the remains of fossil proboscidians. Paleontologists figure that the remains were deposited by rivers and streams starting during the middle Miocene and later uplifted by seismic activity. Other legends associated with the area said that "Siwalik dragons" had jewels in their skulls, and Falconer found that many of the fossils in fact held large calcite crystals.



Mammoth

Year: 1802
Scientist: Rembrandt Peale
Artist: Alexander Anderson
Originally published in: Mammoth of New York exhibition announcement
Now appears in: American Monster by Paul Semonin
It looks like early American scientists had a little trouble figuring out just where to put the tusks, though this rendering may have more to do with the artist's faulty memory than the articulator's bad judgment. Peale turned the tusks upside down, however, in later articulations.
Larger image available



Mammoth

Year: 1803
Scientist/artist: Rembrandt Peale
Originally published in: Philosophical Magazine
Now appears in: American Monster by Paul Semonin
Despite the vegetarian diet of modern elephants, Rembrandt Peale was convinced that the prehistoric creature known in the early 19th century as the *incognitum* had been carnivorous. He gave considerable thought to how a carnivorous animal — that would need to tear apart its prey, and also dig up tasty shellfish hors d'oeuvres — would need backwards-facing tusks well-suited to those tasks. He apparently didn't give as much thought to how such a creature would walk without injuring its front legs on its own tusks.

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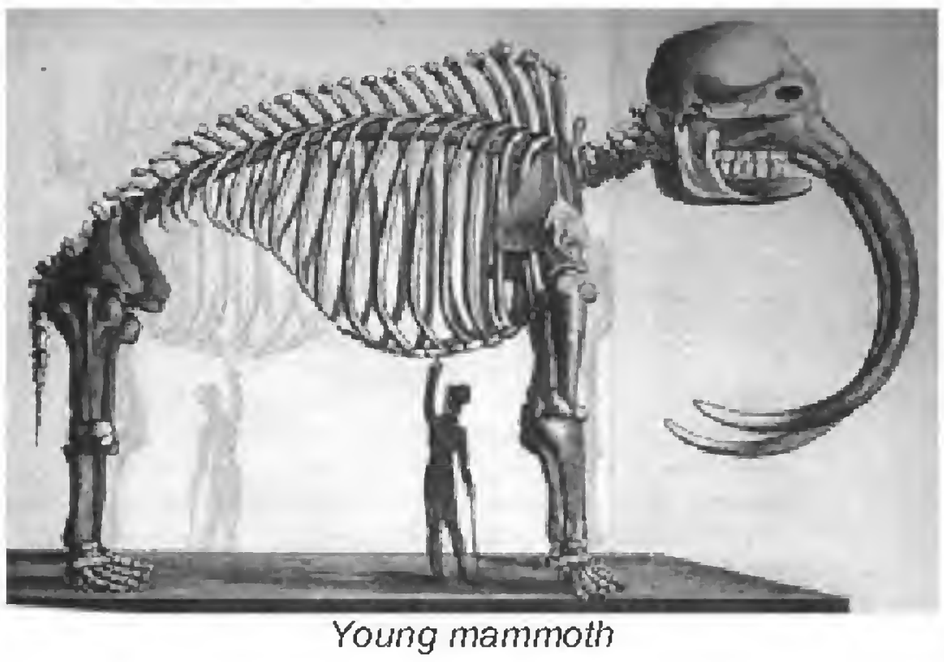
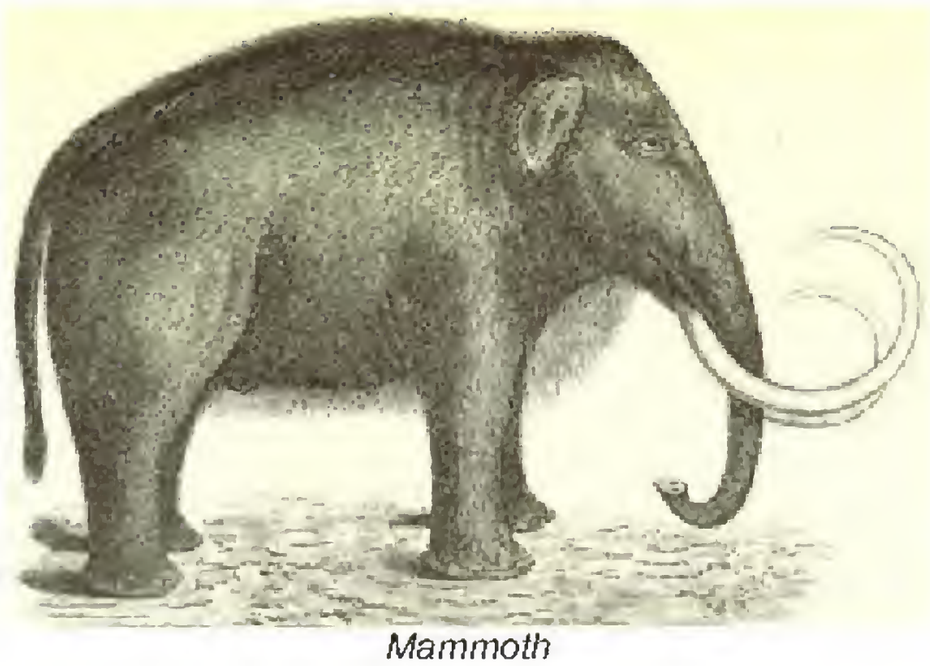


Young mammoth

Year: 1821
Scientist: Charles Willson Peale
Author: E. Montulé
Originally published in: Voyage to North America, and the West Indies, in 1817
Now appears in: The Earth on Show by Ralph O'Connor
Rembrandt Peale's father, Charles, acquired three specimens of fossil proboscidian in 1801, and he put the best one on display in his museum. This picture shows the articulated skeleton of a "Young Mammouth" (actually a mastodon) with a grown man under the belly to give an idea of the beast's size. Before the discovery of recognized dinosaurs, the tusked creatures satisfied the public's appetite for ancient monsters. This ancient monster would have needed a mighty tough pair of front legs.
Larger image available

Mammoth

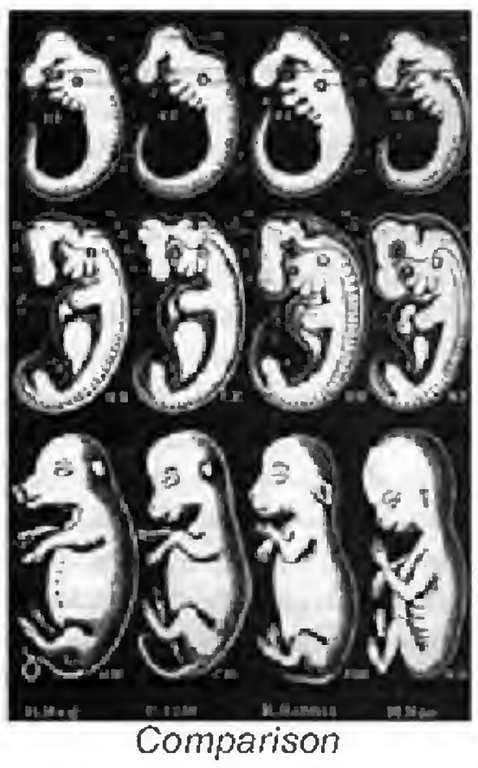
Century: 18th
Scientist/artist: Unnamed Swedish soldier
Now appears in: Fossil Revolution by Douglas Palmer
To the now-anonymous Swedish soldier who trekked across Siberia in 1722, a mammoth apparently looked an ox with braided horns and clawed feet. Over the next century, a much clearer picture of the mammoth emerged from the mists of deep time.



Mammoth

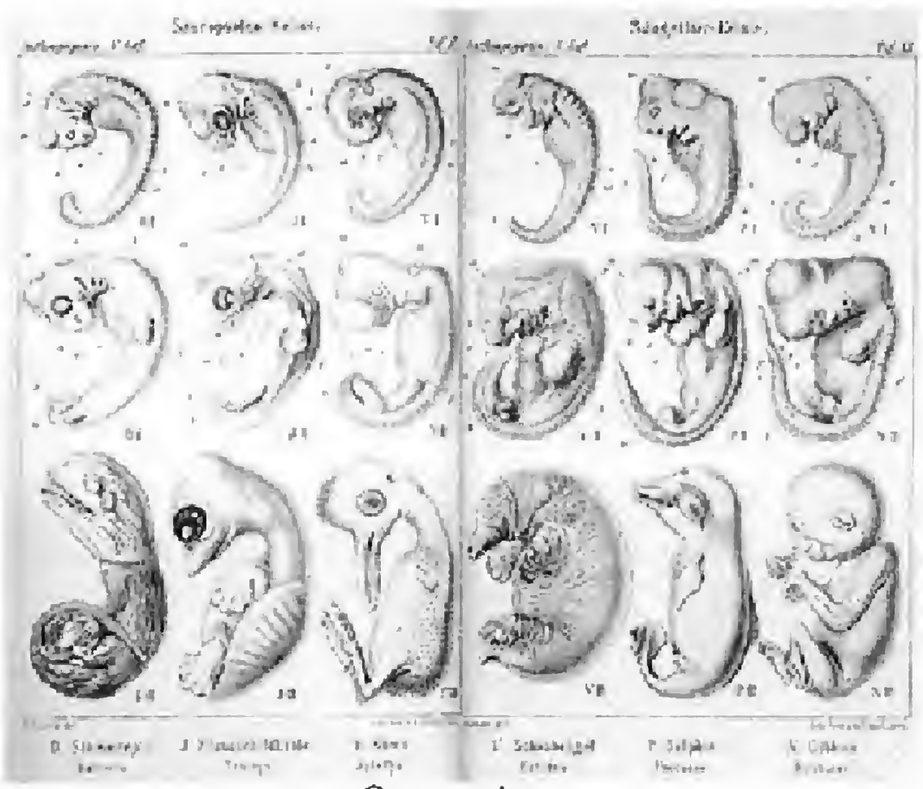
Year: 1885
Scientist/artist: Friedrich Ratzel
Originally published in: Bibliothek Geographischer Handbücher
Image provided by: The British Library
Although slightly stiff and misshapen, this woolly mammoth is much closer to our modern understanding of the extinct mammal than the ox-like creature portrayed a century earlier. The caption identified it as Elephas primigenius, part of the elephant family. After the species was originally designated by Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, it was reclassified as

Mammuthus primigenius.



Comparison

Year: 1877
Scientist/artist: Ernst Haeckel
Originally published in: Anthropogénie ou Histoire de l'Evolution Humaine
Now appears in: Human Origins: The Search for Our Beginnings by Herbert Thomas and I Have Landed by Stephen Jay Gould
German zoologist Ernst Haeckel claimed that "ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny," or that an animal's embryological development repeats the stages of its ancestral evolution. This picture comparing embryos was intended to support that view. In early stages, vertebrate embryos look similar, but not nearly so similar as Haeckel claimed. (In the first edition of one of Haeckel's books, an identical woodcut was accidentally duplicated for three different types of embryos, a blunder that dogged Haeckel for years.) Though embryologists recognized problems with this depiction when it was published, and Darwinian evolutionists abandoned the ontogeny-phylogeny link early in the 20th century, Haeckel's drawings still managed to populate many biology textbooks.



Comparison

Year: 1903
Scientist/artist: Ernst Haeckel
Originally published in: Anthropogénie (5th edition)
Now appears in: The Tragic Sense of Life by Robert J. Richards
Haeckel came under fire for this embryo comparison, for excluding the limb buds of the echidna embryo. Nevertheless, this depiction was a substantial improvement over versions that had appeared in earlier works. As graphic techniques improved, so did the embryo renditions.
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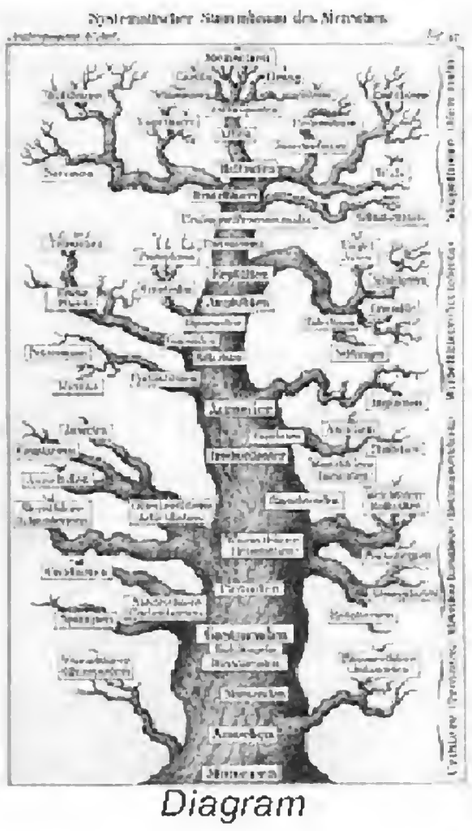

Diagram

Year: 1874
Scientist/artist: Ernst Haeckel
Originally published in: Anthropogénie
Now appears in: The Tragic Sense of Life by Robert J. Richards (Also discussed in God — or Gorilla: Images of Evolution in the Jazz Age by Constance Areson Clark)
Another way in which Haeckel gave 20th-century paleontologists and evolutionary biologists

heartburn was by publishing this tree of the ancestry of humans. The thick trunk culminating in the human species suggests that evolution's only aim was in making us. In fact, this was one of many diagrams Haeckel published, and his view of evolution was much less anthropocentric than this diagram implied.
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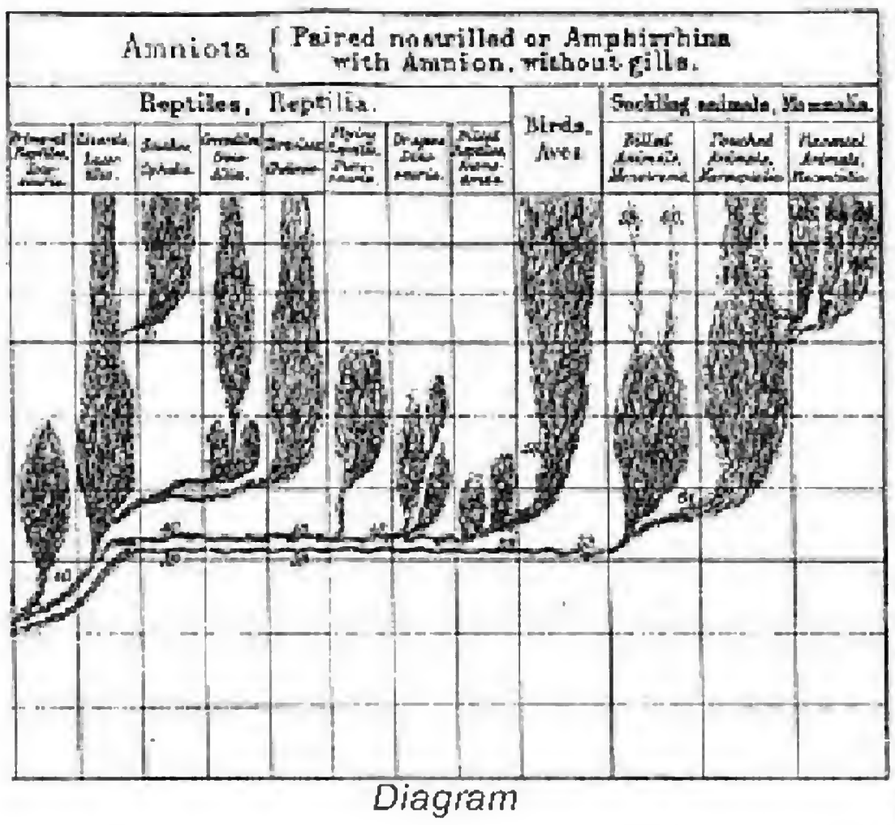


Diagram

Year: 1875
Scientist/artist: Ernst Haeckel
Originally published in: The History of Creation
Now appears in: God — or Gorilla: Images of Evolution in the Jazz Age by Constance Areson Clark
Also less widely reproduced than Haeckel's human-centered tree diagram, this fernlike diagram of amniotes has been cited as a more accurate view of the diversity of life.
Larger image available

Uintatherium

Year: 1886
Scientist/artist: William Gunning
Originally published in: Life History of Our Planet
Now appears in: Dinosaur Plots by Leonard Krishtalka
This is a depiction of life in the Eocene epoch, roughly 45 million years ago. The largest animal to the left is a Uintatherium. The velvet antlers are a mistaken addition, but the many bony protrusions, surprisingly, are not.

yyy

Year: 1658
Scientist: Willem Piso
Originally published in: De Indiae Utriusque
Now appears in: Matters of Exchange by Harold J. Cook
This "tiger" was based on an earlier, slightly more accurate drawing of the real beast. In making the woodcut, the artist Piso employed put the tiger's stripes into the shadows of the animal's muscles. In the original drawing, the tiger's head didn't quite match the shape of the real cat's, but this woodcut changed the shape even more.

Year: 1616
Scientist: Ulisse Aldrovandi

Lavers points out that scholars have long debated whether this image — appearing on about 60 percent of the Indus Valley's seals, according to a 1981 study by archaeologist Shereen Ratnagar — represented some kind of bovine in which one horn hides the other, or a unicorn. Either way, this often-copied creature might have been the mark of a ruling clan or class, and seals like this have been found throughout the Persian Gulf region. People in faraway lands would have seen such seals (or their impressions), and probably remembered and talked about them. Moreover, the seals' links to prestige might have fired some imaginations. So even if this bovine creature with what looks like a single horn might not have been meant to represent a unicorn, it might have fueled legends of the beast.

Lion attack

Year: c. 500 BC
Photographed in: Persepolis, Iran by diocal (some rights reserved)
Discussed in: The Natural History of Unicorns by Chris Lavers
If seals from a great empire could convince the people who saw them that certain creatures were real, bas-reliefs on imperial grounds must have been even more effective. Visitors to Persepolis, Iran, an ancient capital of the Persian Empire, could feast their eyes on a lion feasting on another animal. But what was that other animal? Perhaps it was just a bull with two horns, one horn hidden neatly behind the other. Historians have debated whether artistic representations in perfect profile like this one were understood to mean two horns, or whether only one horn was intended. Either way, some visitors might have come away convinced of the reality of a single-horned creature.

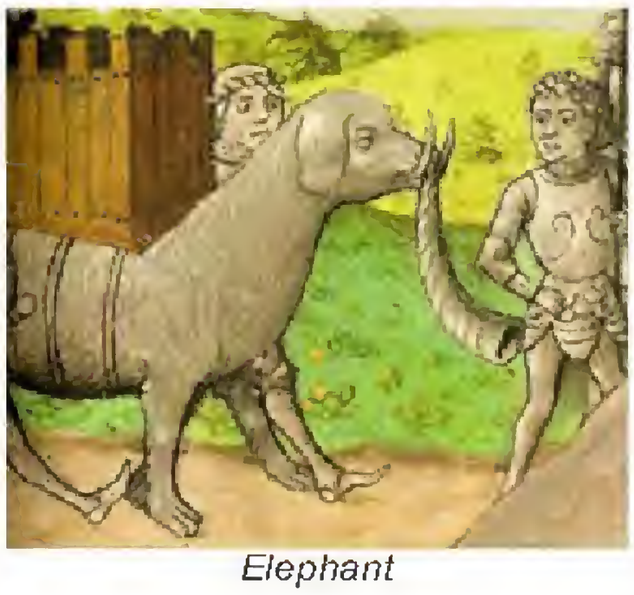
Unicorn mosaic

Century: 12th
Originally appeared in: Floor mosaic of church of San Giovanni Evangelista, Ravenna
Now appears in: Nature and Its Symbols by Lucia Impelluso and Stephen Sartarelli
This is a fairly typical depiction of a unicorn with the possible exception of its cloven-hoofed, rather than horse-hoofed, feet. Although associated with purity and chastity, the unicorn was also said to be wily, and only captured through trickery.

Year: 1616
Author: Thomas Coryate (or Coriate)
Originally published in: Thomas Coriate Traveller for the English Wits: Greeting: From the Court of the Grand

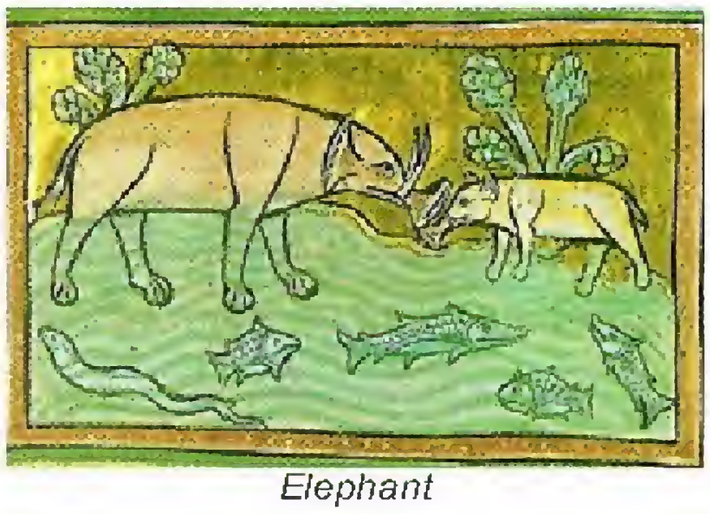
Zebra

Originally published in: De Quadrupedibus Solidipedibus
Now appears in: Amazing Rare Things by Attenborough, Owens, Clayton and Alexandratos
Europeans might have been surprised to learn of a donkey-like animal with black and white stripes. This zebra appears equally surprised, and looks reproachfully at the reader, as if to ask who played the prank of striping his coat. For a depiction of an unfamiliar animal native to a different continent, however, this picture wasn't too bad.



Elephant

Year: c. 1475
Scientist/artist: Vincent of Beauvais
Originally published in: Mirror of History
Now appears in: Beasts: Factual and Fantastic by Elizabeth Morrison © J. Paul Getty Museum
Believe it or not, this was supposed to be an elephant. It's a safe guess that the illustrator of this medieval manuscript hadn't seen the actual animal, at least not with a clear head. But he might have seen an elephant tusk, and confused it with the animal's trunk. This dog-like creature appeared in an illustration of "the wonders of India" and to the 15th-century European mind, India was the epitome of exotic locales.



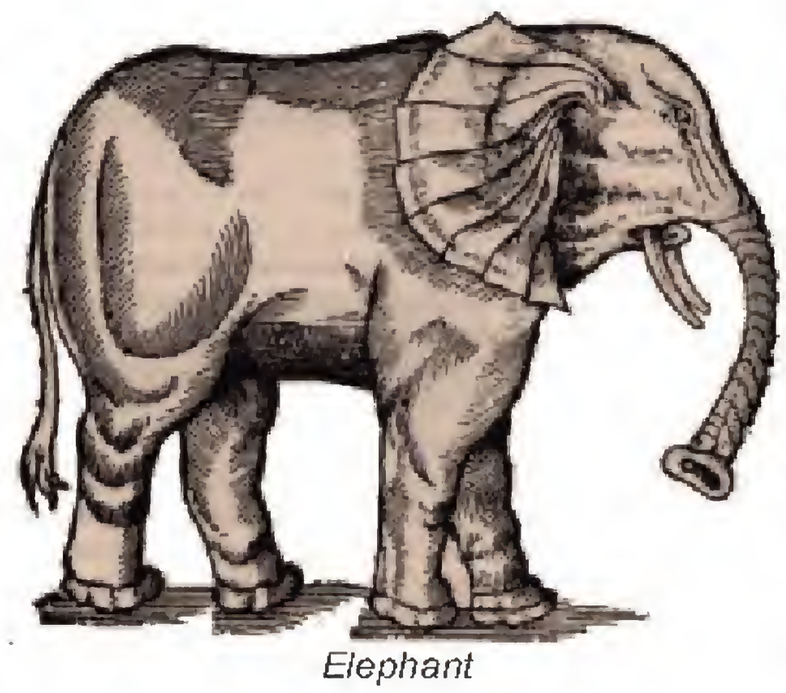
Elephant

Century: 13th
Originally published in: Bestiary
Now appears in: The Life and Lore of the Elephant by Robert Delort © British Library
Although this depiction preceded Vincent of Beauvais's by about two centuries, it was somewhat closer to the actual creature. Still, this image had its drawbacks, including a trunk that looked like a trumpet. In the days of Ancient Rome, elephants had been used in Europe in warfare and kept as status symbols by the powerful. Perhaps saddest of all, elephants were used in gory spectacles — tossed into arenas with felines and bears. (Romans wanted to see which animal would finish off the others.) After the fall of the Roman Empire, elephants became much rarer in Europe, to the point that most Europeans had no idea what the animals looked like.

Year: c. 1440
Originally published in: Tractatus de Herbis
Now appears in: Tractatus de Herbis (ca.1440) in Public Domain Review
Published multiple times, Tractatus de Herbis was an herbal aimed at helping apothecaries and other healers spot the plants they needed for their patients. One version of the herbal, produced in northern Italy, was largely text free, relying instead on detailed illustrations of

Elephant

plants, sometimes next to small illustrations of the conditions they could treat. But not every illustration in the book dealt with healing herbs. The herbal included a multitude of miniature animals, some familiar, some strange. This illustration includes a couple — but only a couple — features identifying it as an elephant. Aside from the trunk and tusks, almost everything else — the small pointed ears, the long fur and the paws — belong to animals that Europeans likely found more familiar. This strange, scowling proboscidian appeared on the same page with a couple other exotic mammals, namely a lion and a very sophisticated-looking leopard.


Elephant

Year: 1573-1585
Scientist: Ambroise Paré
Originally published in: Des Monstres
Now appears in: On Monsters and Marvels by Ambroise Paré, translated by Janis Pallister, and The Great Naturalists edited by Robert Huxley
This rather unfriendly looking elephant was a pretty good depiction for its time. Paré didn't describe the elephant with complete accuracy, but some of his observations rival those of today: "They surpass in largeness all other four-footed animals; nevertheless . . . they can be so readily tamed that they remain the most gentle and tractable of all beasts; one can teach them, and they understand how to carry out several charges." This illustration also appeared in Conrad Gesner's work, and Paré likely borrowed it from there.

Pliny's elephant

Year: 1582
Scientist: Pliny the Elder
Originally published in: Naturalis Historia
Now appears in: Renaissance Beasts edited by Erica Fudge
This woodcut pair in Pliny's book showed pretty accurate views of the giant animal. Even though he lived in Antiquity, Pliny remained enormously influential during the Middle Ages and Renaissance, and with good reason. Elephants were a more common site in Antiquity than in the two millennia that followed. So while Renaissance greats Gesner and Aldrovandi had probably never seen an elephant, Pliny probably had. Yet Pliny might not have approved of this illustration — he disliked illustrations in general. And with or without illustrations, he passed along odd information about pachyderms. Just one example: one elephant wrote a happy note (in Latin!) in the sand describing its glee over the defeat of the Celts.

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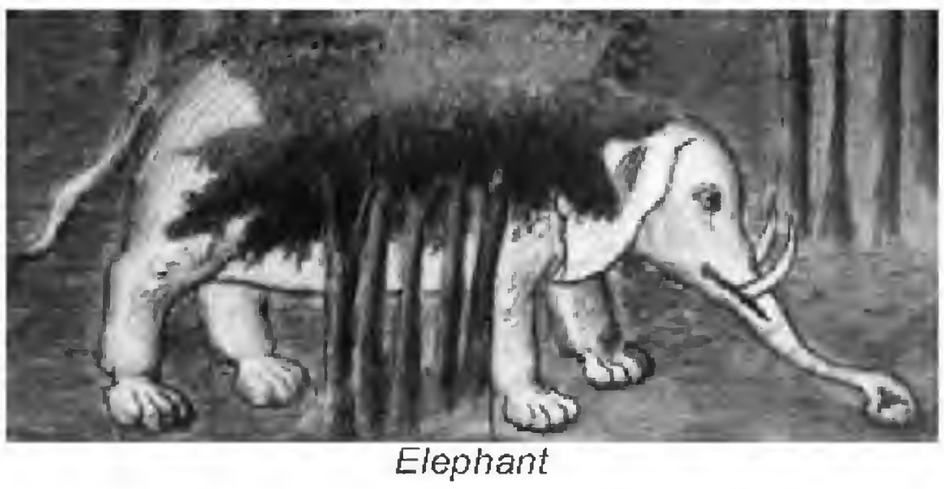
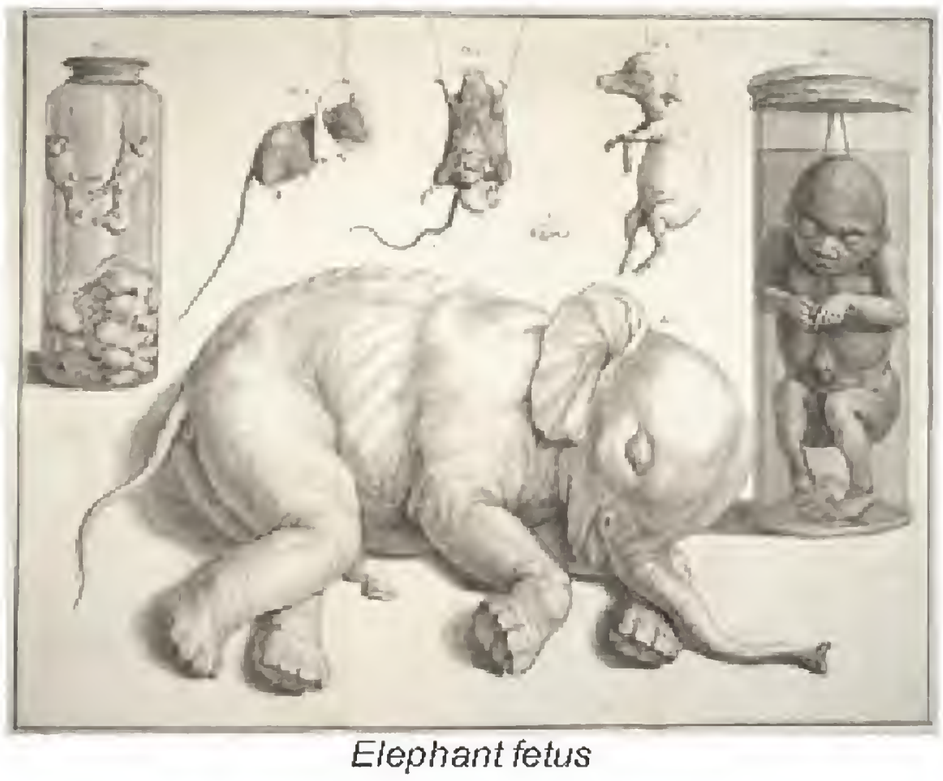


Elephant

Year: 1403
Explorer: Marco Polo
Originally published in: Livre de Merveilles
Now appears in: The Book of Fabulous Beasts by Joseph Nigg
This elephant appeared in the same picture as a unicorn. Polo apparently recalled both animals from his travels. The illustrator apparently grasped the prehensile nature of the elephant's trunk, and in this picture, the end of the trunk looks almost like a human hand. The feet, meanwhile, look like giant paws.



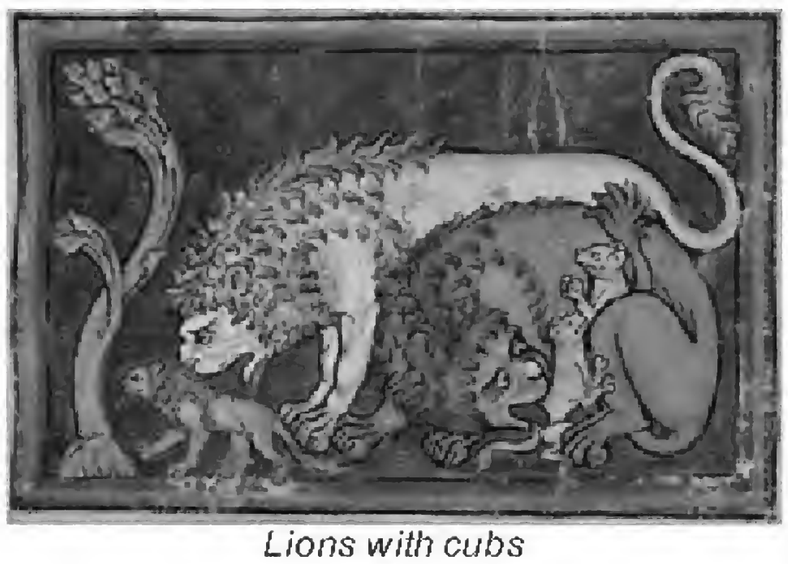
Elephant fetus

Year: 1734
Scientists: Linnaeus and Albertus Seba
Originally published in: Thesaurus
Now appears in: Linnaeus's Asian Elephant was Wrong Species (http://www.nature.com/news/linnaeus-s-asian-elephant-was-wrong-species-1.14063) and A Cabinet of Natural Curiosities by Albertus Seba
This picture presents an odd mix to the modern viewer, showing the fetus of an elephant next to the fetus of a human inside a jar. The 17th- and 18th-century Dutch apothecary and collector Albertus Seba might judge the modern viewer squeamish as these fetuses counted among his prized possessions. Lavishly illustrated volumes of Seba's Thesaurus show not just items in his collections, but even some type specimens — the examples of species — that the 18th-century naturalist Linnaeus named with his system of binomial nomenclature. One specimen, which Linnaeus named Elephas maximus, was pictured in Seba's book, and the specimen itself has been preserved to the present day. The Swedish Natural History Museum in Stockholm still houses the elephant fetus, but its days as a type specimen are now over. When Linnaeus named Elephas maximus, he believed there was only one elephant species in the world. Subsequent naturalists recognized that African elephants differed enough from Indian elephants to be placed in their own species and later their own genus, Loxodonta, and eventually split African elephants into two separate species. Biologists can easily distinguish African from Indian elephants based on their ears and the shapes of their heads, but identifying the species can be harder in a fetus. Nevertheless, biologists long suspected that the pickled elephant might be named incorrectly. DNA analysis proved their hunch correct, although finding good DNA to sample was tricky. Alcohol may preserve animal tissue for a long time, but the liquid is tough on DNA. Diagnostic tissue — a protein known to differ in Asian and African elephants — was finally located in the little elephant's esophagus.

Year: c. 1150-75
Appears at: Medieval Art: A Resource for Educators © The Metropolitan Museum of Art
Also discussed in: The Book of Fabulous Beasts by Joseph Nigg
The collections of the Cloisters of the Metropolitan Museum of Art includes a stony arch,

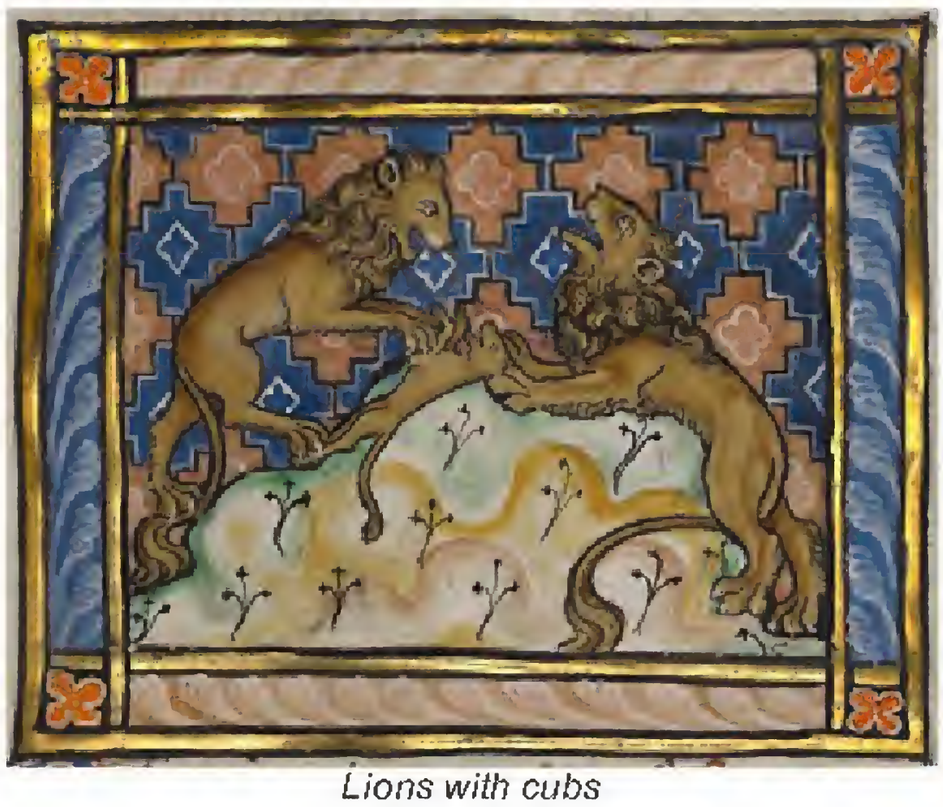
Carving

rumored to be from a church at Narbonne. Dating from around the late 12th century, the Narbonne arch includes an assortment of real and imagined animals. Clockwise from the lower left, the arch includes a manticore, pelican, cockatrice, siren, griffin, amphisbaena, centaur and lion. The lion, of course, is a very real animal, but this depiction indicates that medieval Europeans had scant experience with lions in the wild. A lion in the wild wouldn't hesitate to make a meal of you, even if you were a woman, a child, a prisoner, or even a shrewd soul who politely prostrated yourself before the kingly beast. A lion in the wild wouldn't wear a crown, though this cheerful cat does. The animals shown in this arch reflected tales from bestiaries. Kingly and kind, lions still had their eccentricities, the typical bestiary reported. From the Metropolitan Museum of Art: "Although the lion was considered brave — as seems to be the case here — it also feared fire, human hunters, creaking wheels, and white roosters."



Lions with cubs

Year: c. 1200
Originally published in: Bestiary
Now appears in: "The Physiologus, the Bestiaries and Medieval Animal Lore" by F.N.M. Diekstra in Neophilologus (Also available at A Bestiary © The British Museum)
Medieval bestiaries occasionally relayed objective observations about animals, but more often used the creatures to make a moral argument. This picture illustrates a common legend, namely that lion cubs are brought to life by the roaring and breathing of their fathers. In a society infused with Christianity, it's not hard to imagine who the lion fathers represented. The little tyke on the far right certainly looks like he's just been on the receiving end of a mighty roar.



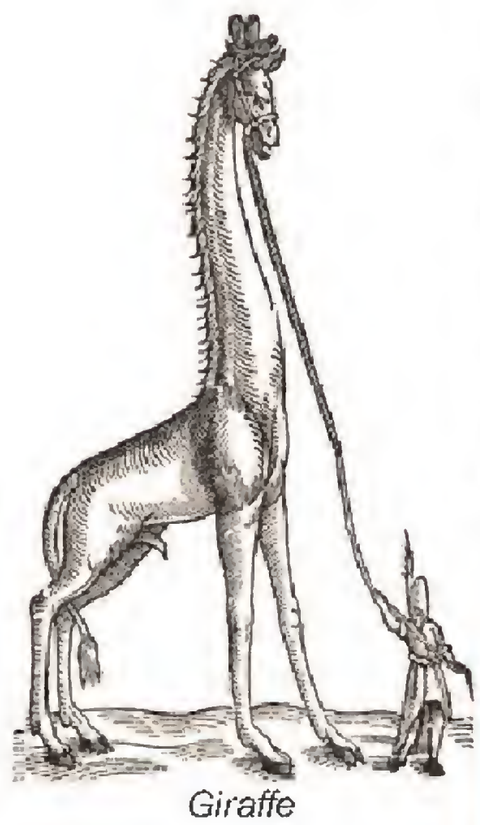
Lions with cubs

Year: c. 1270
Originally published in: Bestiary
Now appears at: Two Lions Digital image courtesy of the Getty's Open Content Program
Also discussed in: Beasts: Factual and Fantastic by Elizabeth Morrison
Another depiction of the lion's legendary fathering skills appears in this gilded illumination. The mother, having given birth to a lifeless cub, looks heavenward while the father inhales, preparing to breathe life into the newborn. In fact, the cub is three days old. The Getty explains, "The lion, the king of beasts, was understood in the Middle Ages as a symbol of Christ. So the story of the cub's

three days of lifelessness was interpreted as a reflection of the three days between Jesus' Crucifixion and his Resurrection. Few Europeans ever saw lions, native to Africa and Asia. Nevertheless, the artist rendered the beasts with remarkable verisimilitude." That both the mother and father have manes is a forgivable mistake.

Giraffe

Year: 1486
Artist: Erhard Reuwich
Originally published in: Peregrinationes in Terram Sanctam
Now appears in: Tall Blondes: A Book About Giraffes by Lynn Sherr
Unfortunately for European education of the time, this was supposed to be a giraffe. Reuwich apparently tried to depict the animal from memory and remembered an antelope better. Given how unusual giraffes are, and how few 15th-century Europeans saw one, this illustration may have been regarded as far more plausible than the real thing. In Reuwich's day, woodcuts weren't exactly copyrighted, and the same picture could easily appear in multiple books. This image also appeared in works by Conrad Gesner and Edward Topsell.
Larger image available



Giraffe

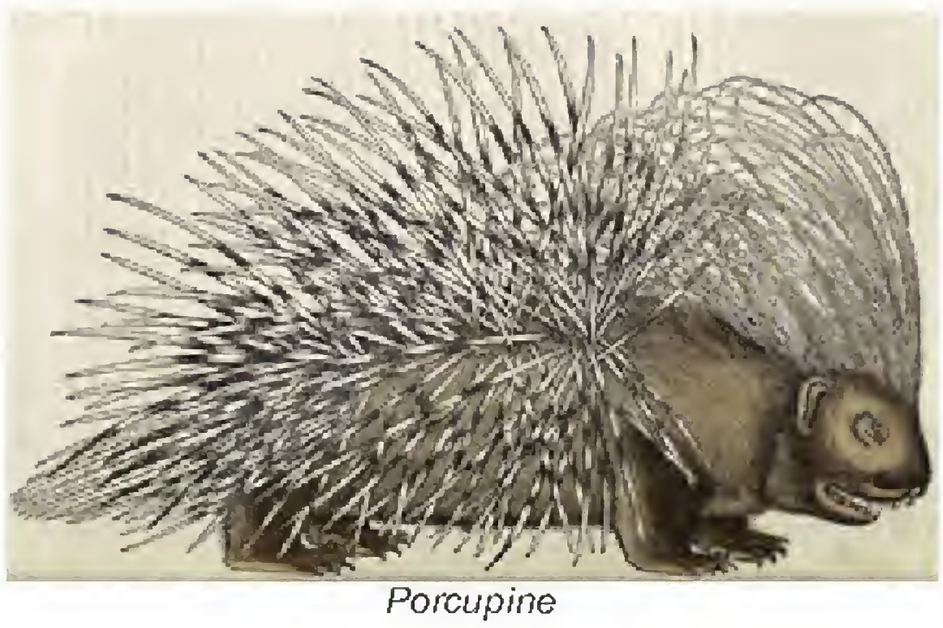
Year: 1559
Scientist/artist: Melchoir Luorgius
Published in: Historie of Foure-Footed Beastes
Now appears in: Tall Blondes: A Book About Giraffes by Lynn Sherr
Originally made in the 16th century, this woodcut later appeared in the book Edward Topsell published in 1607, along with Reuwich's antelope-like giraffe. This depiction was much closer to the mark, although — given the tiny human for scale — this giraffe appears closer in size to a typical Jurassic sauropod than a modern giraffe.
Larger image available

Giraffe

Year: 1551
Artist: Pierre Belon
Originally published in: Histoire Naturelle des Estranges Poissons
Now appears in: The Great Naturalists edited by Robert Huxley
Though still not perfect, Belon's 16th-century rendition of a giraffe was more accurate. The neck is too short, but the head looks more like a giraffe's, and this picture hints at the correct color patterns.
Larger image available

Year: 1551

Scientist: Conrad Gesner

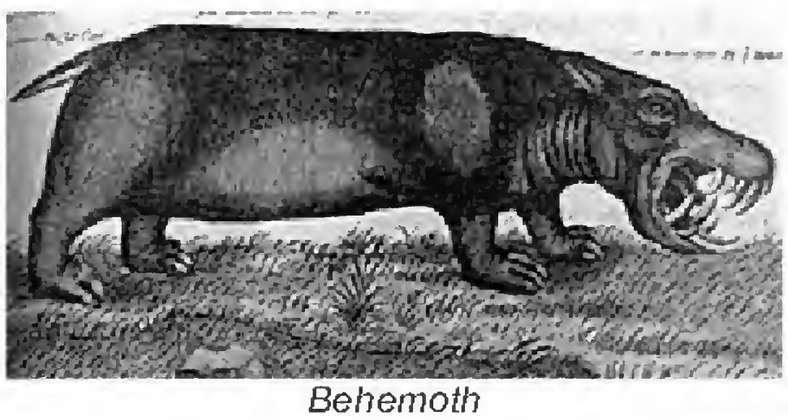


Porcupine

Originally published in: Historia Animalium
Now appears in: "The Sources of Gessner's Pictures for the Historia Animalium" by S. Kusukawa in Annals of Science
This porcupine isn't a bad rendition. It not only shows the finer hairs near the porcupine's head, but also the black-and-white coloring of the quills. The face looks a little ferocious, but given the porcupine's arsenal, 16th-century Europeans can probably be forgiven for thinking of this occasionally cuddly creature as bad-tempered.
The woodcut was apparently modeled on a porcupine shown around Zurich by a beggar who likely valued money over comfort.
Larger image available

Wild boar

Year: 1551
Scientist: Conrad Gesner
Originally published in: Historia Animalium
Now appears in: Eating Right in the Renaissance by Ken Albala
This wild boar illustration wasn't too bad. At the time it was published, however, Europeans held some nutritional notions that would strike a modern reader as strange. One idea was that eating an animal's brains would make you smarter. Another was that the ideal food to consume would be most like yourself. That would be humans. It doesn't appear anybody took that advice seriously enough to actually feast on human flesh. But pork was considered the next best thing.

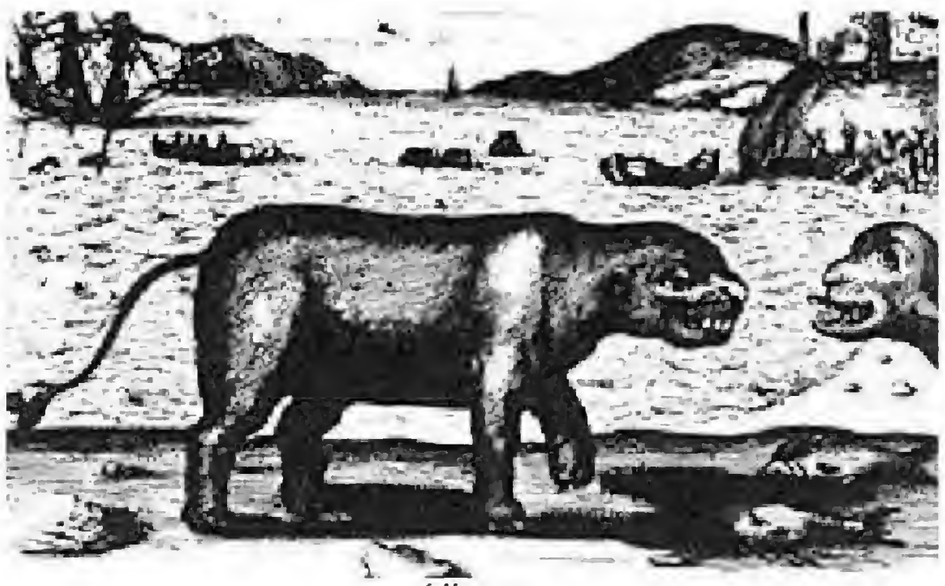


Behemoth

Year: 1682
Scientist/artist: Hiob Ludolf
Originally published in: New History of Ethiopia
Now appears in: American Monster by Paul Semonin
This ferocious version of a hippopotamus was called the behemoth, "the largest of God's creatures." In all fairness, the real hippo does have large teeth in its lower jaw, and it can be aggressive, although the real animal doesn't look quite this scary.

Year: 1667
Scientist/artist: Athanasius Kircher
Originally published in: China Illustrata
Seventeenth-century German Jesuit polymath Kircher described an equally weird hippopotamus in his book about China, describing the "marine horse" as "completely deformed and horrible to look at."

Year: 1694

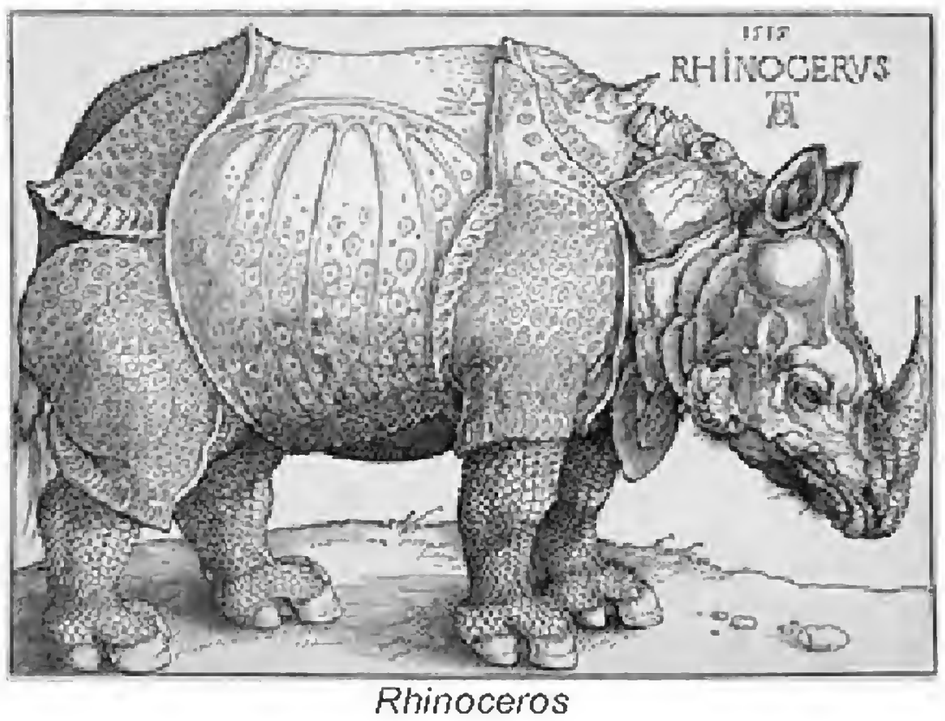


Hippo

Hippo

Scientist/artist: Pierre Pomet
Originally published in: Histoire Générale des Drogues
Now appears in: From Private to Public by Marco Beretta

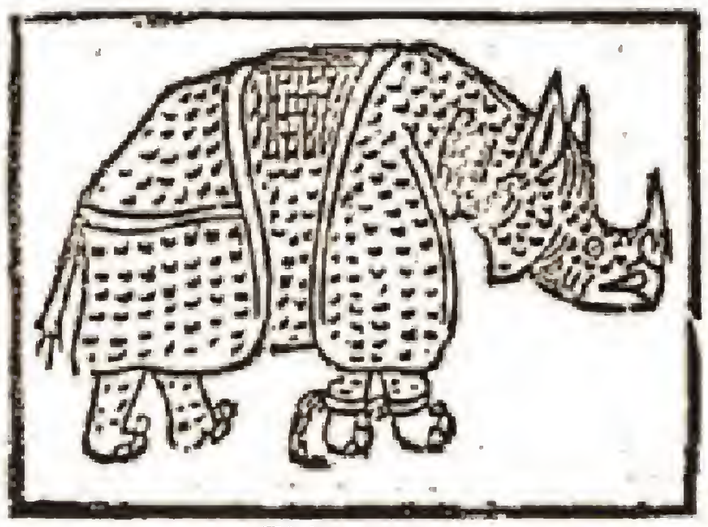
Far more accurate than Kircher's hippo, though still a little fanciful, Pomet's hippo appeared just a few decades later. The creature next to it is pretty recognizable as a seahorse.
Larger image available



Rhinoceros

Year: 1515
Artist: Albrecht Dürer
Originally published in: Dürer's leaflet and Cosmographia Universalis by Sebastian Münster
Now appears in: The Pope's Elephant by Silvio Bedini, Nature's Artist by Victoria Salley, Merchants and Marvels edited by Smith and Findlen and "A History of the World in 100 Objects" from the British Museum and BBC Radio
In the early 16th century, a Portuguese official based in India relayed to his king, Manuel I, an Indian rhinoceros. Remarkably, the animal survived the 120-day sea journey to Lisbon. Manual I re-gifted the beast to Pope Leo X. The beast was one of several spectacular gifts plucked from the far reaches of the Portuguese empire. Sadly, the much shorter sea journey to Rome ended in failure. The ship sank and the animal perished. (Some people even blamed the rhino for the sunken ship, claiming it threw its weight around until the vessel capsized.) Its body was later recovered and its hide stuffed for display. A sketch of the rhino reached the famed artist Dürer, who then made this woodcut. Although this woodcut shows an unusually stout rhino with griffin-like legs and an ornate hide, it's really not a bad likeness. The reason its skin looks like armor may be that the animal described really had been outfitted with its own protective suit. Dürer, who did not personally see the rhino, actively marketed his depiction in the form of leaflets with sensational text describing this "deadly enemy of the elephant" exuberantly goring the proboscidian at every opportunity. Dürer's much-admired picture appeared in later works by Ambroise Paré and Conrad Gesner, among others.

Year: 1515
Originally published in: Giovanni Giacomo Penni's pamphlet The Form, Nature and Habits of the Rhinoceros
Now appears in: The Pope's Elephant by Silvio Bedini
Dürer's rendition of the rhino may have had a few weaknesses, but it was far superior to the picture in the pamphlet published in Rome the same year. The artist behind this woodcut is

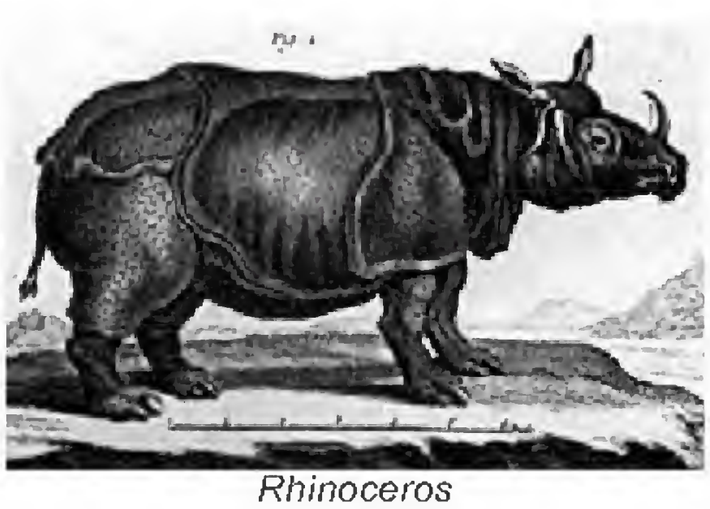


Rhinoceros

unknown, but the author of the pamphlet's poetry was Giovanni Giacomo Penni. He apparently had seen neither an actual rhino, nor Dürer's woodcut.

Rhinoceros and elephant

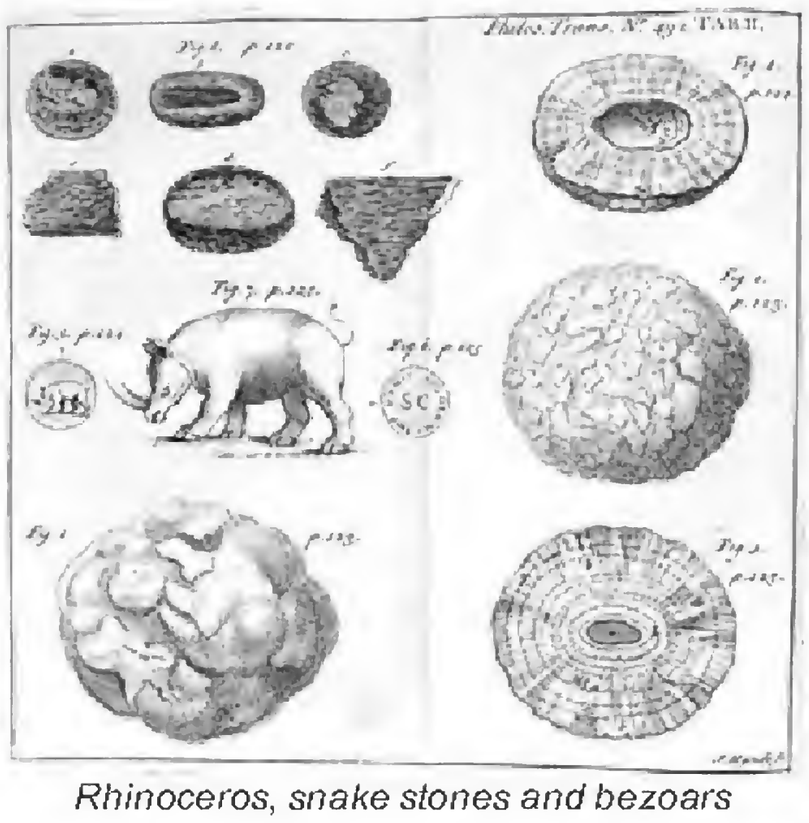
Year: 1685
Scientist/artist: Jan Griffier
Originally published as: "A True Representation of the Two Great Masterpieces of Nature . . ."
Now appears in: Curious Beasts by Alison E. Wright
This mezzotint had a long title, and part of the title (besides "true representation") was "drawne after the life," as if the artist had personally eyeballed these great masterpieces in the flesh. More likely the artist eyeballed Albrecht Dürer's 16th-century representation of a rhinoceros, in which he added armor. The overall shape of the rhino is pretty accurate, and the same goes for the elephant, though this elephant bears an awful lot of wrinkles. These fighting beasts exhibit the animosity they'd been assumed to feel for each other since the days of Pliny.
Larger image available



Rhinoceros

Year: 1751-1780
Scientist/artist: Diderot and D'Alembert (engraving modeled after Oudry)
Originally published in: Encyclopédie
Now appears in: Clara's Grand Tour by Glynis Ridley
Two centuries after Dürer's engraving, a more accurate one appeared in Diderot and D'Alembert's encyclopedia and Buffon's Natural History. Unlike the 16th-century rhino, this depiction was based on a specific animal, Clara, who took a tour through the best courts and cities of Europe. One contemporary account described her as a wonderful animal who could plow the ground with her horn. Another described her as a "hideous animal of the female gender." Clara was a generally placid, good-natured animal, but her charm was hardly enhanced by the moisturizer used on her thick skin: smelly fish oil.

Year: 1749
Scientist: Hans Sloane
Artist: J. Mynde
Originally published in: Philosophical Transactions
Now appears in: "Representing the Rhinoceros: The Royal Society between Art and Science in the Eighteenth Century" by Craig Ashley Hanson in Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies
This illustration shows a rhinoceros, purported snake stones (believed to come from behind



Rhinoceros, snake stones and bezoars

the eyes of vipers, and supposed bezoar stones (thought to form in animals' intestinal tracts, made up of indigestible materials). To the modern viewer this assemblage looks miscellaneous, but to the doctor Sloane, all the items were related. Sloane thought the snake stones could counteract fevers and, not surprisingly, venom. He argued that the bezoars could draw substances out of the body, and could be particularly helpful in childbirth — though they had to be used with caution lest they coax out more than the baby. He also said that shavings from the rhino's horn could cure poison. Despite the misinformation in Sloane's argument, the rhino illustration relayed some accurate and fairly novel information: A rhino could have two horns. Renaissance and Enlightenment Europeans were more familiar with one-horned Indian rhinos than two-horned African rhinos, and many scholars assumed that accounts of two-horned rhinos from Antiquity were in error.
Larger image available

Dromedary

Year: 1607
Scientist: Edward Topsell
Originally published in: Historie of Foure-Footed Beastes
Now appears in: Edward Topsell, The History of Four-footed Beasts and Serpents, 1658
(http://www.henleymba.com.hk/web/FILES/special-collections/featuretopsell.pdf)
Topsell described two types of camels: the two-humped (Bactrian) camel and the one-humped (Arabian) camel, or dromedary. His depiction of the animal wasn't too bad from the shoulder backward. But the head and neck didn't quite match the rest of the animal. Or much of anything else normally seen in nature. Topsell wrote, "A camel is a gentle and pleasant tame beast whereof there are plenty in Africa especially in the Deserts of Lybia, Numidia and Barbary by which Africans estimate their own wealth."

Year: 1651
Scientist: Johannes Faber
Originally published in: Thesaurus
Now appears in: The Eye of the Lynx by David Freedberg
Naturalist Faber had his doubts about the New World creature known as the "Mexican dog," but he portrayed it like this anyway, largely because he (mis)trusted his source for the illustration. This picture was based on copy by Nardo Antonio Recchi of an original by Francisco Hernández, made in the 16th century.

Canis Mexicana

Gulon

Year: 1658
Scientists/artists: Conrad Gesner and Edward Topsell
Published in: Historie of Foure-Footed Beastes
Now appears in: Topsell's Histories of Beasts edited by Malcolm South
The gulon, or glutton, was likely based on the wolverine. The creature was believed to be so gluttonous that it would eat its fill, pull its body between two branches to clear its guts, and go back for more. Here the creature is seen copiously depositing tokens of its esteem around the carcasses it has eaten. Topsell believed that many beasts existed to give moral instruction to man, and the gulon was a shining example. "It may be that God has ordained such a creature in those countries where it is found to express the abominable gluttony of the men there, so that they may know their deformed nature," he explained. No prisoner of political correctness, he continued, "Such are the men in Muscovia, in Lithuania, and most shameful of all in Tartaria."

Map section

Year: 1658
Scientist: Ferdinand Verbiest
Originally published as: Kunyu Quantu (A Map of the Whole World)
Now appears in: The Hunterian, University of Glasgow: Director's Choice by David Gaimster
Verbiest was a Flemish Jesuit who, like his brothers in the Society of Jesus, was welcomed in China's imperial court for his knowledge of topics such as astronomy and math. The Jesuit missionary-Chinese cartographer collaboration produced a map showing continents as they were understood in the 17th century: Eurasia, Africa, America and a massive southern continent called Magellanica. This map continued a centuries-long belief that the landmasses in the Northern Hemisphere were counterbalanced by an equally large landmass in the Southern, even though it hadn't yet been precisely located. Before discovering that Antarctica was (1) much smaller and (2) much colder than Magellanica, cartographers could easily imagine the place was home to animals akin to what had been found in Africa, along with some mythical creatures. Inhabiting Magellanica in this map section are animals that had appeared in 16th-century encyclopedias, including a giraffe and a heavily-armored rhino. Alongside them are a unicorn, a gluttonous gulon, and a giant arachnid.
Expanded image available

Year: 1642
Scientist/artist: Ulisse Aldrovandi

Unicorn Mogul, Resident at the Towne of Asmere, in Easterne India
Now appears in: The Book Nobody Read by Owen Gingerich
Coryate claimed to see two unicorns in his travels to India. As astronomer and science historian Owen Gingerich has observed, this woodcut is trimmed, which suggests that the picture was actually copied from an earlier work (perhaps Conrad Gesner's). One reason unicorns held such fascination for medieval and Renaissance Europeans was that their horns, called alicorns, were thought to protect their owners from poison. Europe's royal families often acquired political power by poisoning their enemies, and some of the upper crust may not have been above testing their concoctions on their own family members.

Unicorn in captivity

Year: c. 1495-1505
Appears at: The Unicorn in Captivity courtesy The Metropolitan Museum of Art
Material also discussed in: Sea Monsters by Joseph Nigg
Unicorn legends may have existed since antiquity, but the most iconic images of the mythical creature arguably date from the Middle Ages, when the unicorn and other real and imagined life forms were all loaded with symbolism.
From the Metropolitan Museum of Art: "The seven individual hangings collectively known as The Unicorn Tapestries, are among the most beautiful and complex works of art from the late Middle Ages that survive. Luxuriously woven in fine wool and silk with silver and gilded threads, the tapestries vividly depict scenes associated with a hunt for the elusive, magical unicorn. The The Unicorn Tapestries may have been created as a single image rather than part of a series. In this instance, the unicorn probably represents the beloved tamed. He is tethered to a tree and constrained by a fence, but the chain is not secure and the fence is low enough to leap over. The unicorn could escape if he wished but clearly his confinement is a happy one, to which the ripe, seed-laden pomegranates in the tree—a medieval symbol of fertility and marriage—testify. The red stains on his flank do not appear to be blood, as there are no visible wounds like those in the hunting series; rather, they represent juice dripping from the bursting pomegranates above. Many of the other plants represented here, such as wild orchid, bistort, and thistle, echo this theme of marriage and procreation: they were acclaimed in the Middle Ages as fertility aids for both men and women. Even the little frog, nestled among the violets at the lower right, was cited by medieval writers for its noisy mating."
In his book on sea monsters, Nigg explains that terrestrial animals were widely believed to have marine counterparts. So just as Europeans believed the world's vast ocean to host the sea cow, sea dog, sea hog and even sea rhino, it was also believed to host the sea unicorn. Considering many of the objects traded as unicorn horns were actually narwhal tusks, you could say it was a case of accidental accuracy.
Detail of frog and dragonfly

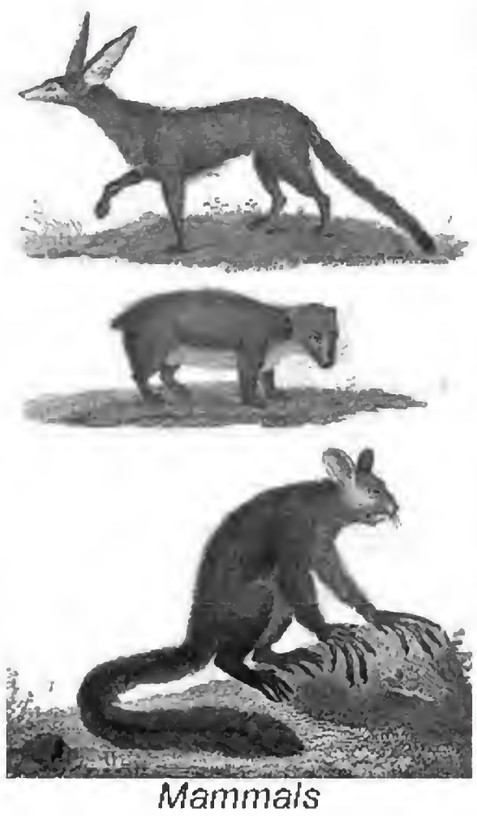
Year: 1705
Scientist/artist: Nicolaus Witsen
Originally published in: Noord en Oost Tartarye

Leafy stag

Originally published in: Monstrorum Historiae
Now appears in: Visual Cultures of Science edited by Luc Pauwels
An amateur collector claimed to have found a deer whose antlers looked eerily like foliage. Aldrovandi later published this picture of the deer, foliage intact. Science historian Francesco Panese has observed, however, that Aldrovandi's readers didn't necessarily believe they were seeing an accurate depiction.
Larger image available

Fettered roe

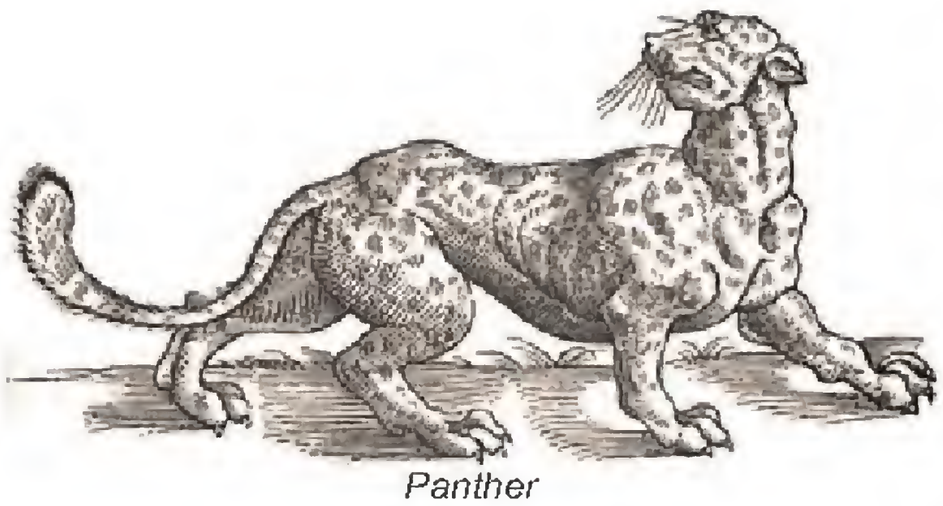
Year: 1677
Scientist: Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz
Originally published in: Journal des Sçavants
Now appears in: Visual Cultures of Science edited by Luc Pauwels
Leibniz explained that this deer had been shackled for charging passers by and, as a result, developed odd protrusions. He likened it to prisoners remarking upon stories that "teach us that great sadness or anxiety can cause the color of a prisoner's hair to change overnight." More specifically, "its aqueous humour could no longer be dissipated once the animal was attached as it usually is by the heat that such animals generate by means of their charges, leaps and runs."
Larger image available



Mammals

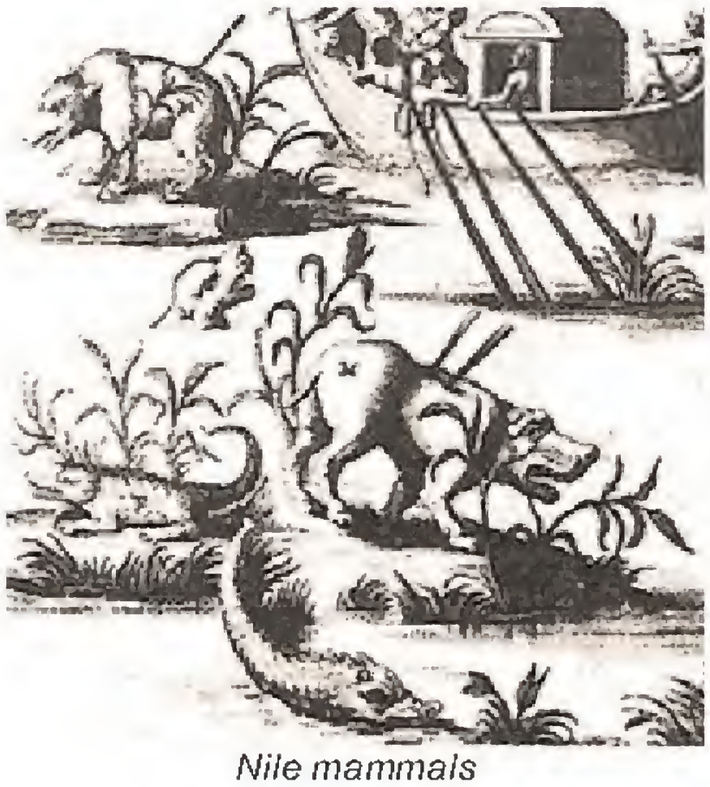
Year: 1826
Scientist: Buffon
Originally published in: Oeuvres complètes de Buffon ed. M.A. Richard
Now appears in: Buffon by Jacques Roger
This image, published decades after Buffon's death, shows three odd-looking mammals from faraway lands: the Saharan fox, the Syrian hyrax, and Madagascar's aye-aye. This fox's ears are so big, they apparently must be a mistake. They are oversized in this picture, but only just. Saharan foxes actually sport disproportionately large ears help the animal dissipate heat. Likewise, the aye-aye looks like a mistake, too, but the real animal looks no less strange. The animal's elongated middle finger (used for fishing grubs out of tree limbs) prompted comedian and lemur enthusiast John Cleese to tell one modern specimen, "Being born with your very own chopstick was very clever."

Year: 1551



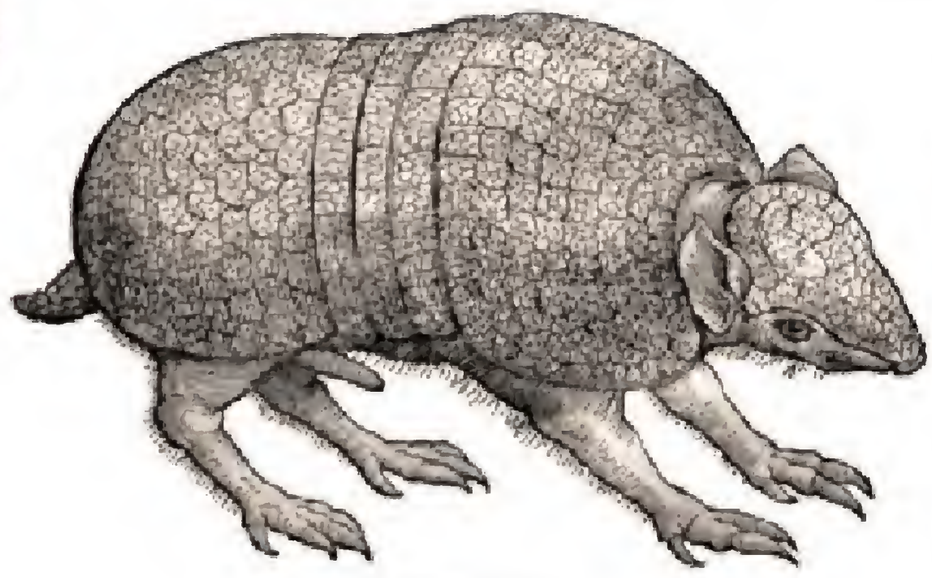
Panther

Scientist: Conrad Gesner
Originally published in: Historia Animalium
Now appears in: Curious Woodcuts of Fanciful and Real Beasts by Conrad Gesner
"No one in medieval Europe ever saw a lion or an elephant or a panther," remarked Odell Shepard in his book on unicorn legends. This picture lends a little credence to that assertion. Although felines are generally fit animals, this one looks like a steroid user.



Nile mammals

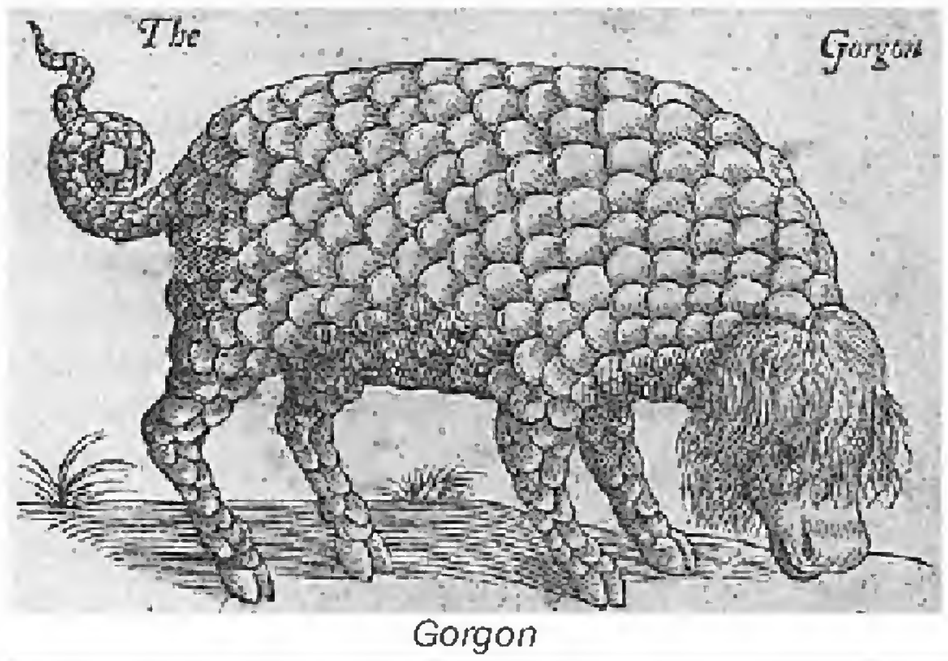
Year: 1668
Scientists/artists: Athanasius Kircher and Agapitus de Bernardinis
Originally appeared in: Mosaic from the Temple of Fortune
Now appears in: Athanasius Kircher by Joscelyn Godwin
This detail is from an engraving, based on a first-century mosaic, that focused on activities surrounding the annual rising of the Nile. Included in the artwork were some odd looking mammals not easily related to real species. Easier to relate to the real world are the spears stuck into them.



Armadillo

Year: 1605
Scientists/artists: Carolus Clusius
Originally published in: Exoticorum Libri
Now appears in: "South American Mammal Diversity and Hernandez's Novae Hispaniae Thesaurus" by Ernesto Capanna in Rendiconti Lincei, April 2009 issue
Long before Kircher produced his armadillo illustration, Clusius portrayed this illustration, though perhaps of a different armadillo species. The legs in this rendition are a little too long, and the fur a little too short. Meaning the illustration, though it has its errors, is probably less weird-looking than the actual animal.
Larger image available

Year: 1607
Scientist: Edward Topsell
Originally published in: Historie of Foure-Footed Beastes
Now appears in: The Book of Fabulous Beasts by Joseph Nigg
Topsell, who published much of Gesner's work, supplemented Gesner's woodcuts and descriptions with additional creatures. This "gorgon," appearing on the title page of the 1607

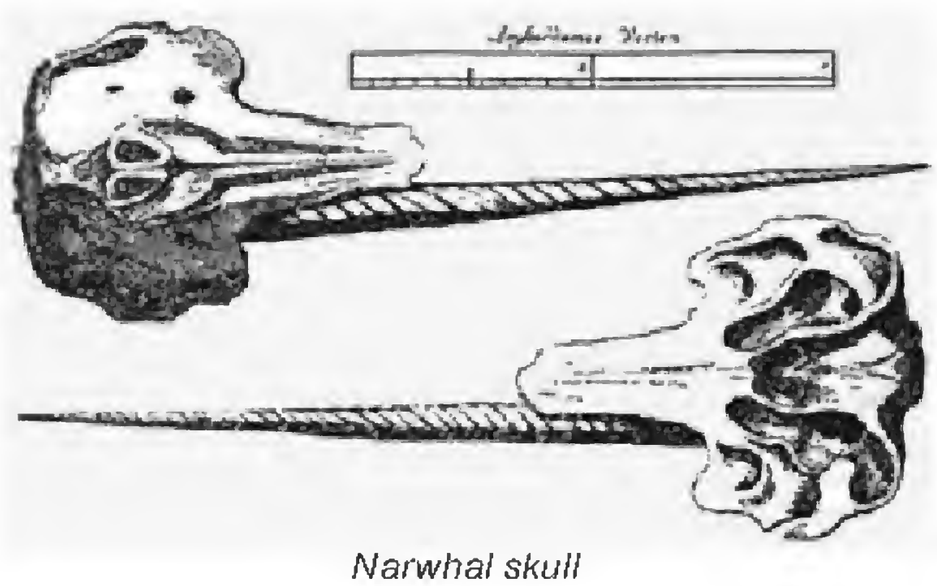


Gorgon

edition of Topsell's book, more closely resembles another mythical beast: the catoblepas. Like the basilisk, this animal was believed to have a lethal stare.

Larger image available

Narrative text and graphic design © by Michon Scott - Updated December 14, 2014



Narwhal skull

Now appears in: The Lore of the Unicorn by Odell Shepard
These narwhal skull illustrations have a minor error in that the furrows run clockwise, which they apparently don't do in nature. This small mistake, however, is more than offset by the much bigger mistake the illustration corrects. The adult males of these marine mammals have ivory tusks extending from the left side of the upper jaw. These tusks, often sold as alicorns, had long been believed to be unicorn horns.

Carved Narwhal tusk

Century: 12th
Now appears in: "Narwhals or Unicorns? Exotic Animals as Material Culture in Medieval Europe" by Aleksander Pluskowski in European Journal of Archaeology Image © National Museums Liverpool
Centuries ago, trade relayed Narwhal tusks from Greenland to Europe, and en route, the narwhal tusks apparently transmogrified into unicorn horns, or alicorns. Some of the coveted alicorns were used by royalty to stave off poison; a description of a banquet held by Charles the Bold in 1473 listed half a dozen unicorn horns, a couple of them within arm's length of the duke. Other narwhal tusks found their way into church collections. One such tusk, a small snippet of which appears here, might have been used as a processional candlestick. This supposed unicorn horn is especially charming as it's carved in a pattern that fits nicely with the narwhal tusk's natural spiral, and the carvings include winsome dragons. The carving style suggests that it might date to the 12th century. Documentation about narwhal tusks in church collections is scarce, so modern historians can't be sure that this narwhal tusk was really believed to belong to a unicorn. Whatever medieval Europeans did or didn't believe about this specimen, it's easy to see why the traders involved in moving the tusks from northern oceans to Europe advertised the objects as they did. Poison-foiling alicorns were in demand. Nobody cared about narwhal tusks.

Bochart's Rims

Year: 1663
Scientist/artist: Samuel Bochart
Originally published in: Hierozoicon
Now appears in: The Natural History of Unicorns by Chris Lavers
Born in 1599, Bochart undertook an enormous task: to analyze the nature and history of every animal mentioned in the Bible. The holy book mentioned the unicorn, and although there are good reasons to think the unicorn was symbolic, Bochart took the references to it literally. He considered but decided against the rhino and wild ox, and settled on the "reem" or "rim." Readings of Near Eastern literature convinced him

that there existed a kind of one-horned goat, and he figured that must be the animal he sought. Centuries later, Odell Shepard commented on the unintended consequences of studying zoology in the library.
Larger image available

Unicorn

Year: 1658
Scientist/artist: Ulisse Aldrovandi
Originally published in: Monstrorum Historiae
Now appears in: Monsters: A Bestiary of the Bizarre by Christopher Dell
This 17th-century unicorn featured a flat face, a lion's mane, cloven hooves in the front and chicken feet in the back, and an accusatory pout.
Larger image available

Unicorn

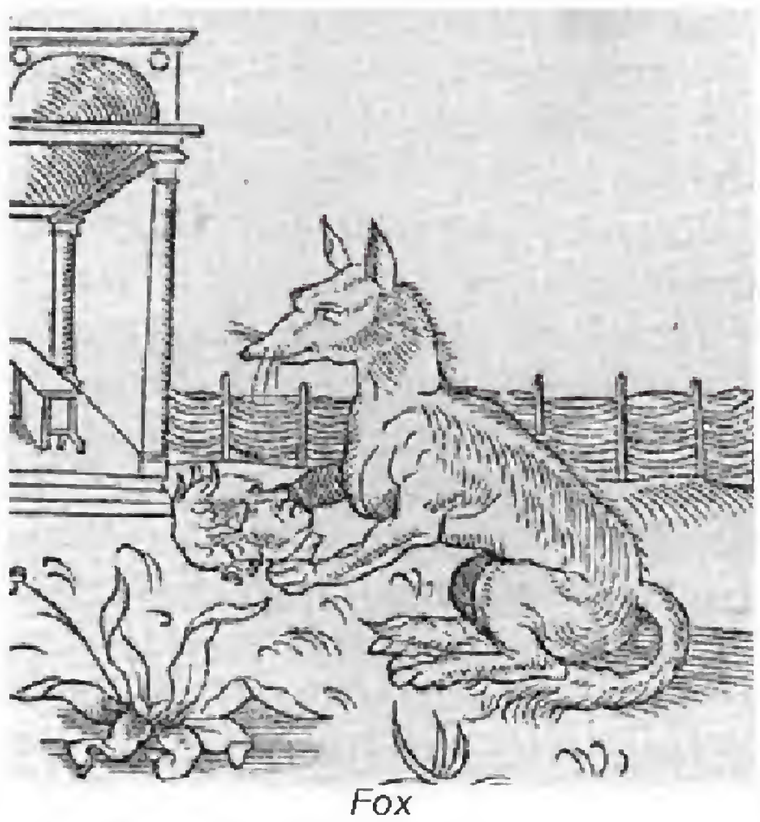
Year: 1663
Discoverer: Otto von Guericke
Scientist: Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz
Artist: Nicolaus Seelander
Originally published in: Protogaea
Now appears in: Fossils: Evidence of Vanished Worlds by Yvette Gayrard-Valy, American Monster by Paul Semonin and Protogaea by Leibniz
The savants working with these fossils were apparently so convinced unicorns must be real, they made one where it didn't previously exist. This "unicorn" was pieced together from mammoth and possibly rhinoceros remains found in a gypsum quarry near Quedlinburg. Von Guericke didn't publish a picture in his own book in 1672. Leibniz probably directed Seelander to style his rendering after images appearing in contemporary periodicals. The dotted lines indicate the animal's "missing parts." Misguided as it was, this was likely the first attempt to reconstruct a vertebrate fossil skeleton, but the poor thing wasn't even given hind legs.
Larger image available

Century: 13th BC
Appears at: Cylinder Seal and Modern Impression with Winged Horse with Claws and Horns
© The Metropolitan Museum of Art
From the Metropolitan Museum of Art: "The gift of Nanette B. Kelekian included cylinder and stamp seals dating from the later fourth millennium B.C. to the Sasanian and Early Byzantine periods of the early first millennium A.D. The geographical range extends from Anatolia to

Seal impression

Mesopotamia and Iran, with rich material from Syria and Cyprus. This seal can be dated on stylistic grounds to the late fourteenth to thirteenth century B.C., a period of intense interaction between the eastern Mediterranean world and the Near East: the modeled style and interest in movement are features associated with western stimuli."

This horse goes one step beyond Pegasus with its clawed feet. With its mixture of bird and horse features, this creature might have been deliberately invented to represent a powerful individual or family, or it might have been based on a fleeting glimpse of a real animal.



Fox

Year: 1534
Scientist/artist: Andrea Alciati
Originally published in: Emblematum Libellus
Now appears in: Cultures of Natural History edited by Jardine, Secord and Spary

This was quite a robust and thoughtful fox, considering it could hold and contemplate a human head. In fact, this woodcut appeared in a book about emblems, so this fox depiction was probably not meant to be taken literally. Not long after Alciati published his book, the famous naturalist Conrad Gesner published an encyclopedia of four-footed beasts, and the lengthy chapter on the fox not only pictured and described the animal, but enumerated its uses to people, and recounted just about every fox legend ever told.

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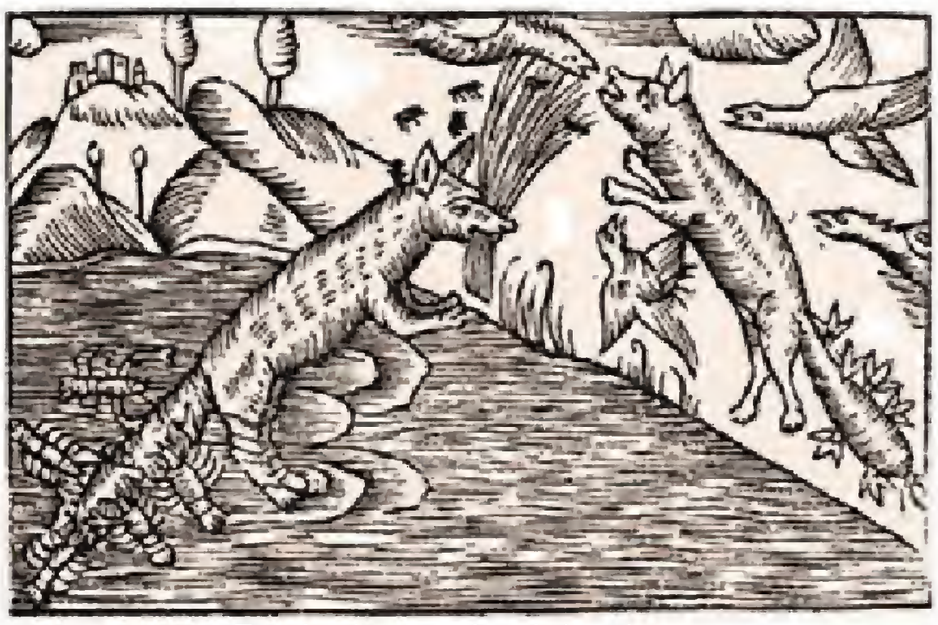


Fox losing and gaining bugs

Century: 16th
Now appears in: "A New Aspect of a Renaissance Geologist" by Aldrich, Leviton and Sears in 2007 Geological Society of America Annual Meeting (Also discussed in Cultures of Natural History edited by Jardine, Secord and Spary)

Olaus Magnus was just one of many naturalists who passed along fox folklore. This woodcut apparently conveys two 16th-century beliefs about the crafty animal. Foxes were believed to be tormented by flies and gnats (chances are, the people who wrote about them were). So, the story was, the fox solved this problem by getting a mouthful of hay and lowering itself into the water, hay still in its mouth. Once all the bothersome bugs had taken up temporary residence in the hay, the fox would open up its mouth and its multi-legged troubles would drift away. The fox was also believed able to catch crayfish with its tail. So this woodcut shows a fox getting rid of one group of arthropods while

acquiring another.

Lynx

Year: c. 1521
Originally published in: Noble Lyfe and Natures of Man of Bestes Serpentys Fowles and Fishes
Now appears in: "Fossils as Drugs" by Christopher Duffin in Ferrantia
At the dawn of the 17th century, when a group of young naturalists near Rome decided to form a scientific academy, they chose as their totem the lynx. Members of the Lincean Academy may not have believed the legend that the animal could see through rock, but they did believe the lynx to be especially perceptive. Many Europeans believed the animal had another remarkable ability: peeing a gemstone capable of curing a long list of ills. Known sometimes as Lyncurium or Lapis Lincis, the lynx stone was really a crystal such as tourmaline or zircon, or a fossil such as belemnite or amber. Some naturalists said the lynx stone was like amber, which suggests they could identify amber separately. And not all naturalists believed in the lynx stone's curative abilities; Pliny for one doubted the lore. But for people who did believe, lynx pee turned to stone was amazing. Taken in various forms, it was thought to calm pregnant women and children, as well as treat scrofula (infection of the lymph nodes perhaps caused by bovine tuberculosis), gout, jaundice, digestive problems, poisoning, and heavy bleeding from menstruation and/or wounds. Hildegard von Bingen, an abbess and something of a medieval celebrity, extolled the virtues of this stone, but warned that if it was taken for ills other than chronic stomachache or painful urination, it would stop the heart *and* shatter the skull. Some said the lynx stored its coveted gemstone in the back of its throat, which would suggest the animal also knew how to suppress its own gag reflex.

Hedgehog in grapes

Century: 13th
Originally published in: Medieval manuscript
Now appears at: A Hedgehog Digital image courtesy of the Getty's Open Content Program
Also discussed at: This is no ordinary hedgehog (http://thegetty.tumblr.com/post/47291211796/this-is-no-ordinary-hedgehog-the-bestiary-book)
Unlike elephants or giraffes, hedgehogs were familiar to medieval Europeans, and this depiction shows a recognizable animal. But the behavior shown here isn't an accurate reflection of the animal's daily activities so much as a small morality tale to the reader. This hedgehog is gathering grapes, and the animal was said to impale the juicy fruits on its spines then scurry away. In this sense, the snuffling little animal symbolized the devil who could run off with one's poorly guarded spiritual truths.

Year: 1658
Scientists/artists: Conrad Gesner and Edward Topsell
Published in: Historie of Foure-Footed Beastes

Dogs

Now appears in: Topsell's Histories of Beasts edited by Malcolm South
Topsell devoted over 40 pages of his Historie to man's best friend, and demonstrated that dogs were as loved in the 17th century as they are today. Besides tales of courage and loyalty, he passed tips for how humans could keep dogs healthy, such as, "If you give unto a dog every seventh day or twice in seven days broth or pottage in which ivy is boiled, this will preserve him sound without any other medicine." He also listed ways dogs could keep people healthy, pointing out, for example, that the "hair of a black dog eases the falling sickness."
Larger image available

Cat and mouse

Year: c. 1325-1335
Originally appeared in: Luttrell Psalter
Now appears in: Puss in Books by Catherine Britton
Like dogs, cats were very well known to medieval Europeans, so artists didn't make a lot of mistakes in cat likenesses. But while cats were domestic animals, there were never fully domesticated. Like cats today, they often did what they wanted, and manipulated their owners into giving them more of what they wanted. Europeans' mixed emotions about cats led to mixed treatment of them. They were valued for their ability to catch grain-munching mice, but also associated with witchcraft. While witches were believed to work their evil magic through a multitude of small animals, cats appeared to be their favorites. Feline habits of toying with their prey before making the kill reminded Christians of the devil's habit of toying with damned souls. Better treatment of cats started in the 17th century when aristocrats began keeping them not just as mousers but as pets. Before that, medieval manuscripts often showed cats doing what they were valued for: catching mice. This cat is a little bit off — too skinny front legs and an oddly shaped, perhaps stylized, head — but overall gives an accurate picture. Written descriptions could sometimes do the same. The Franciscan monk and encyclopedist Bartholomeus Anglicus characterized the domestic cat as "a full lecherous beast in youth" and "a right heavy beast in age and full sleepy." Sounds about right.

Year: 1658
Scientist: Edward Topsell
Originally published in: Historie of Foure-Footed Beastes
Now appears at: Topsell's Historie of Foure-Footed Beastes at the University of Houston Digital Library
Topsell got the overall shape of this herbivorous mammal right, although the proportions, such as head size and leg length, were a little off. What's most striking about this animal

Antalope

illustration, though, is its ferocious appearance. This animal has teeth suited to a saber-toothed cat, and sports a Klingon-forehead surface to its snout. Topsell's antelope looks like a formidable carnivore.

Spotted carnivore

Year: c. 1550 BC

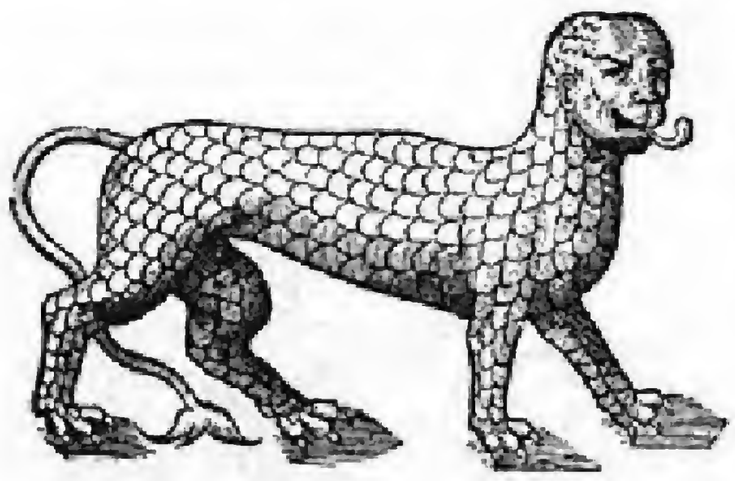
Originally appeared in: Miniature frieze of the West House in Akrotiri
Now appears in: "The Most Ancient Explorations of the Mediterranean" by Marco Masseti in Proceedings of the California Academy of Sciences
At the prehistoric settlement known as Akrotiri on the island of Santorini, perhaps the most thoroughly examined structure is the West House. It contains a miniature frieze playing up Minoan sea power. Part of the scene apparently intends to portray a north African landscape, but the lack of realism suggests that, even if the artist intended to be taken literally, he or she was working from the second-hand descriptions of others. The creature's spots and apparent stalking manner suggest it was some sort of feline.

Monster of Troy

Year: c. 550 BC
Photographed in: Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (Photo by John Boardman)
Now appears in: The First Fossil Hunters by Adrienne Mayor
The Greek hero Heracles and Trojan princess Hesione jointly took on the Monster of Troy, a fearsome beast that appeared along the coast near Sigeum. The story was well known when Homer told it sometime around the eighth century BC. Around 550 BC, an unknown artist painted the scene on this vase, but with a twist. In a vase that otherwise provides realistic depictions of horses, geese, felines and people — although griffins put in appearances, too — the Monster of Troy looks weird. In fact, it looks like a skull, but not one belonging to any known animal. Folklorist Adrienne Mayor has argued that the skull might have been inspired by a real fossil, perhaps a prehistoric whale or giraffe. The bony eye ring might have been inspired by bird remains, from either living or extinct species. If so, then the artist might have rightly recognized a skull but wrongly attributed it to a contemporary monster.

Year: 1662
Scientist: Caspar Schott
Originally published in: Physica Curiosa

These are the creatures too weird to fit anywhere else. Starting with the ancient civilizations, and extending well past the Renaissance, Europeans assumed that a varied assortment of strange beasts populated the world, living in the oceans, on the distant continents, in their neighbors' basements. Explanations for these weird creatures varied over time; sometimes they were considered evidence of divine displeasure, and other times, they were simply sports of nature.



Monster

Year: 1573-1585
Scientist: Ambroise Paré
Originally published in: Des Monstres
Now appears in: On Monsters and Marvels by Ambroise Paré, translated by Janis Pallister
Sixteenth-century surgeon Ambroise Paré wrote several books about monsters ("things that appear outside the course of Nature") and marvels ("things which happen that are completely against Nature"). Paré was known to be a compassionate and talented doctor, and some of his depictions were remarkably accurate. Others were less credible.

Monster

Year: 1554
Scientist: Guillaume Rondelet
Originally published in: Libri de Piscibus Merinis
Now appears in: On Monsters and Marvels by Ambroise Paré, translated by Janis Pallister, and "The Origin of the Sea Bishop" by W.M.S. Russell and F.S. Russell in Folklore, Summer 1975
Rondelet based his sea bishop depiction on an account he received from a physician, Gisbertus Germanus, who saw the creature in Poland. Rondelet was skeptical, and stated that he had omitted from his description several "fabulous" claims about the sea bishop. "I present the image of the monster altogether the way I received it," he continued. "Whether it is true or not, I neither affirm nor deny." The fish, which might have been based on a doctored skate or ray, made an appearance later in the 16th century in Ambroise Paré's Des Monstres, complete with its pontifical garments. It is not known whether Paré himself was a devout Catholic, but a few months before his death, he was reputed to confront the Archbishop of Lyons on behalf of the poor and starving in Paris. Religious animosities ran high during Paré's lifetime and for centuries afterwards, so it's no coincidence that some monsters bore striking resemblances to clergymen. Periods of religious strife likely increased attention to so-called monsters and certainly changed the explanations offered for them, from sins such as greed and vanity to sins of blasphemy and heresy.
Larger image available

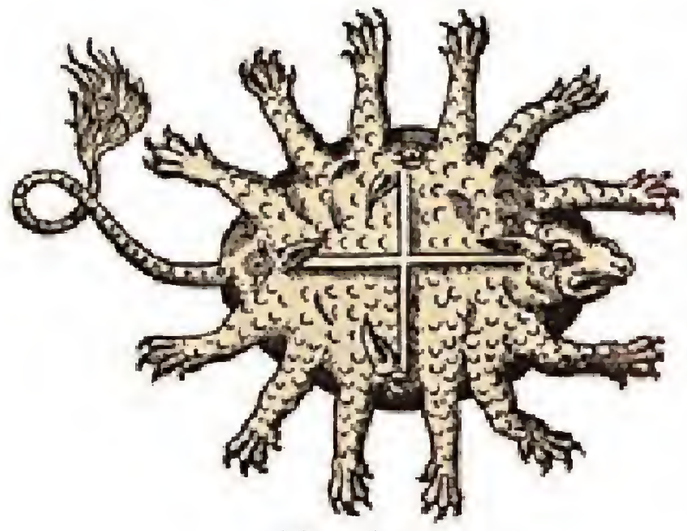
Year: 1562

Cyclops

Scientist: J. Sluperius
Now appears in: Fossils: Evidence of Vanished Worlds by Yvette Gayrard-Valy
Believe it or not, the animal that inspired this hideous depiction is a gentle vegetarian: the elephant. This 16th-century engraving of a cyclops kept alive a myth that started thousands of years before, when ancient Greeks assumed the big skulls they found must have belong to giants, and the median nasal openings must have been single eye sockets.

Vulture

Century: 14th
Originally published in: Peterborough Bestiary
Now appears in: The Bedside Book of Birds by Graeme Gibson
Another real animal sometimes described as monstrous was the vulture, shown here finishing off a human corpse. The bestiary that pictured this bird not only described its alleged ability to spot corpses at a great distance, but also its ability to produce young without a mate. This curious "fact" was enlisted as evidence for the immaculate conception. Vultures were also believed to foretell death. Some said the birds followed doomed armies in search of future meals.



Monster

Year: 1573-1585
Scientist: Ambroise Paré
Originally published in: Des Monstres
Now appears in: On Monsters and Marvels by Ambroise Paré, translated by Janis Pallister
Paré described this simply as "a very monstrous animal that is born in Africa." A similar picture appeared in an earlier book by Gesner, and that creature was described as a sea monster found somewhere between Antibes and Nice.

Year: 1648
Scientist/artist: Ulisse Aldrovandi
Originally published in: Musaeum Metallicum
Now appears in: "Da Vinci's Paleodictyon: The Fractal Beauty of Traces" by Andrea Baucon in Acta Geologica Polonica
Ulisse Aldrovandi was one of the 16th century's foremost naturalists. He studied the world in between the eras of medieval superstition and the Scientific Revolution. Sometimes the Middle Ages won. Musaeum Metallicum included depictions of fossils — some interpreted fairly accurately, others not — and the odd monster. This one appeared to be female.

Year: 1642
Scientist/artist: Ulisse Aldrovandi

xxx

Crane-man

Originally published in: Monstrorum Historia
Now appears in: "Marvels of the East: A Study in the History of Monsters" by Rudolf Wittkower in Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes, 1942
The crane-man, basically a man with a long neck and crane's head, appeared in pamphlets aimed at Europe's most gullible. (Then as now, publishers could make a tidy profit by promoting the macabre.)
Depictions of the crane-man eventually found their way into the occasionally weird works of Aldrovandi, this work published after his death. The crane-man underwent a number of transformations in Europe, from a member of a monstrous race to a one-off monster from Madagascar, to a long-necked yet human-headed tartar. Crane-man pictures circulated through Italy, Germany, the Netherlands, France and England.

Four figures

Century: 13th
Originally published in: Medieval manuscript
Now appears at: A Man Without Knowledge of Fire; A Man Riding a Crocodile; A Centaur; Sanrus Digital image courtesy of the Getty's Open Content Program
Produced in Flanders, this gold-embellished illumination depicted inhabitants of far-off, mythical lands. The medieval illuminator apparently guessed that people who didn't know how to use fire stuck to a vegetarian diet. Even more obvious, the artist had never been within riding range of a crocodile.

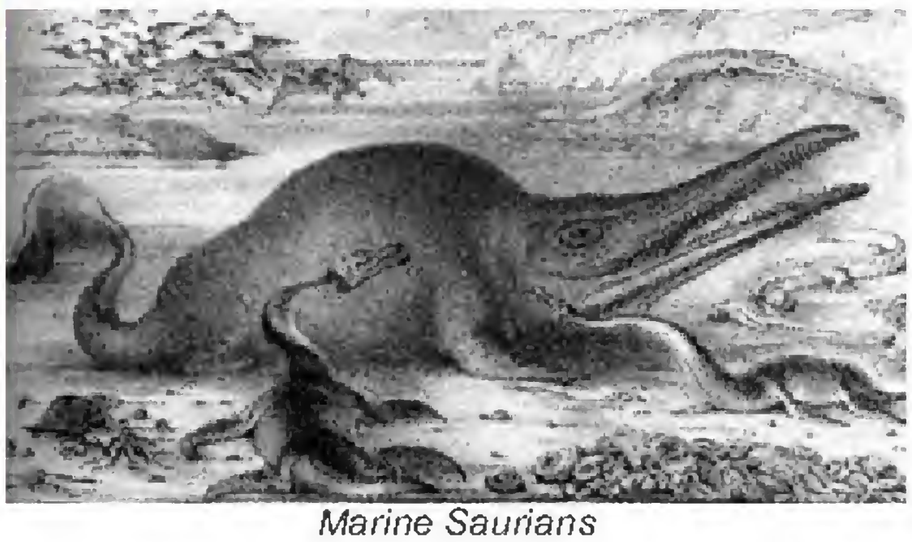
Eight-legged creature

Century: 13th
Originally published in: Creatures from the Ends of the Earth
Now appears at: Praesillus; A Hairy Woman of the Island of Gorgade; A Scorpion Digital image courtesy of the Getty's Open Content Program
Part of a four-up illumination showing odd creatures from faraway lands, this eight-legged animal is probably a medieval Flemish take on a scorpion. Weird as this monster looks, it's still much less horrifying than the actual arthropod.

Year: 1658

Bipedal tabby

Scientist/artist: Ulisse Aldrovandi
Originally published in: Monstrorum Historia
Now appears in: Monsters: A Bestiary of the Bizarre by Christopher Dell
This monster, apparently enhanced by hand-applied colors after printing, looks fairly harmless — a bipedal tabby lacking front legs and, consequently, scratchy claws. Perhaps it could speak, and being a cat, it was probably quite condescending. It was part of a menagerie of odd beasts Aldrovandi described, many of which had some human characteristics.
Larger image available

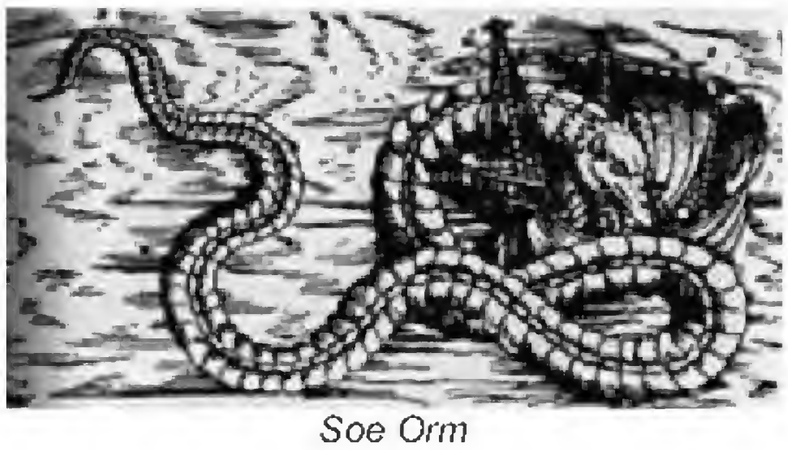


Marine Saurians

Year: 1858
Scientist: William Buckland
Artist: Benjamin Waterhouse Hawkins
Originally published in: "Bridgewater Treatise" in Geology and Minerology
Now appears in: Scenes from Deep Time: Early Pictorial Representations of the Prehistoric World by Martin J.S. Rudwick
This scene from Liassic life (during the Age of Reptiles) shows how 19th-century scientists and artists saw contemporaries of dinosaurs. These dragon-like creatures were marine reptiles.

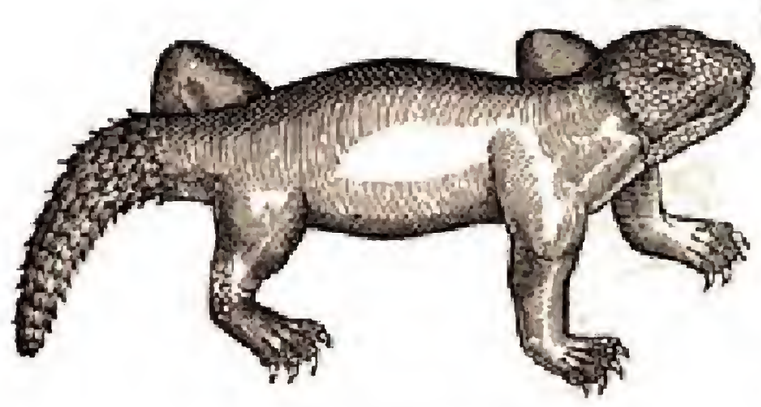
Marine reptile sculpture

Year: 1853
Scientist: Sir Richard Owen
Artist: Benjamin Waterhouse Hawkins
Still appears in: Crystal Palace Park, London (photo by Michon Scott)
In the mid-19th century, Owen and Hawkins collaborated to bring Britain's ancient past to their fellow Victorians at Crystal Palace Park. More than 150 years later, the sculptures still stand, having survived a long period of disrepair. In addition to inaccurate dinosaur reconstructions based on very fragmentary fossils, Owen and Hawkins designed marine reptiles based on more complete finds. On the right is an ichthyosaur, and Hawkins's sculpture is pretty accurate. On the left is a plesiosaur, but while the animal's proportions are pretty good, its neck contortions flirt with fantasy, looking like a dragon or sea serpent. By the time Victorians visited the sculptures at Crystal Palace Park, these animals had largely moved from the realm of the monstrous to the realm of the real — just the very old. All the same, cartoonists in the popular humor magazine Punch delighted in detailing visitors' distress at seeing these sculptures, from wailing children dragged through the park, to nightmares haunting the adults who took them.
Larger image available



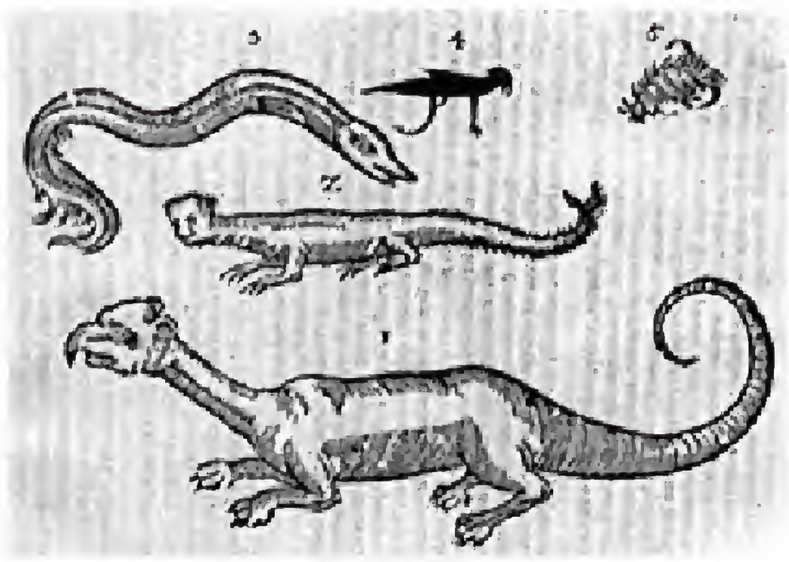
Soe Orm

Year: 1555
Scientist/artist: Olaus Magnus
Originally published in: Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus
Now appears in: The Search for the Giant Squid by Richard Ellis
Magnus described the Soe Orm as, "A very large Sea-Serpent of a length upwards of 200 feet and 20 feet in diameter which lives in rocks and in holes near the shore of Bergen."



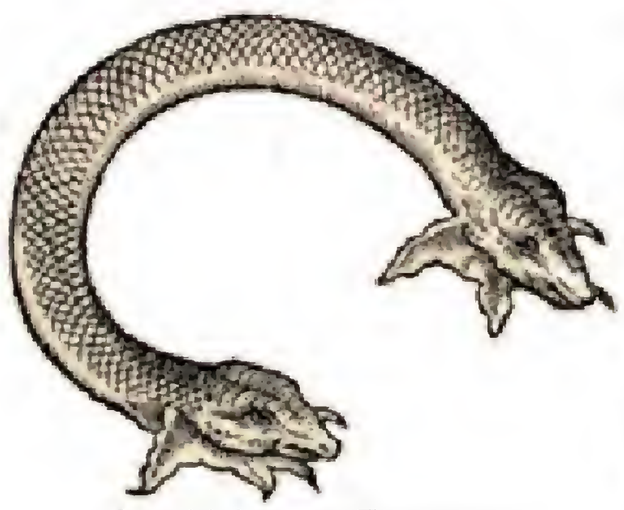
Arabian crocodile

Year: 1551
Scientist: Conrad Gesner
Originally published in: Historia Animalium
Now appears in: Curious Woodcuts of Fanciful and Real Beasts by Conrad Gesner
Described as the "Arabian or Egyptian crocodile," this beast might have been inspired by the sighting of a spiny-tailed lizard.



Parasites

Century: 16th
Scientist/artist: Ulisse Aldrovandi
Originally published in: The History of Serpents and Dragons
Now appears in: Crossing Over by Stephen Jay Gould and Rosamond Wolff Purcell
Despite the title of the publication in which they appeared, these creatures were actually believed to inhabit the human body.



Amphisbaena Europaea

Year: 1651
Scientist/artist: Johannes Faber
Originally published in: Thesaurus
Now appears in: The Eye of the Lynx by David Freedberg and Amazing Rare Things by Attenborough, Owens, Clayton and Alexandratos
Although it stretched the limits of credulity, Faber included this depiction of a two-headed animal, the amphisbaena, in the Thesaurus, recounting, "Just as I became convinced that the two-headed amphisbaena was probably the stuff of myth and fable rather than of truth, the Cavaliere Cassiano dal Pozzo, one of our Linceans, showed me the most truthful image of an amphisbaena in the form of a drawing with all the appropriate colors." The amphisbaena dated back to medieval bestiaries, but the 17th-century Lincean Academy, of which Faber was a member, was generally known for more accurate depictions.
Larger image available

Century: 13th

Two-headed dragon

Originally published in: Medieval manuscript
Now appears at: A Winged Dragon Digital image courtesy of the Getty's Open Content Program
Centuries before members of the Lincean Academy reluctantly illustrated the snake-like amphisbaena, a medieval miniaturist produced this colorful two-headed dragon. The head on the front of this beast appears happy enough, but the head on the tip of the tail looks a bit beleaguered. Perhaps that head better registers the effects of a shared digestive system lacking a convenient outlet.

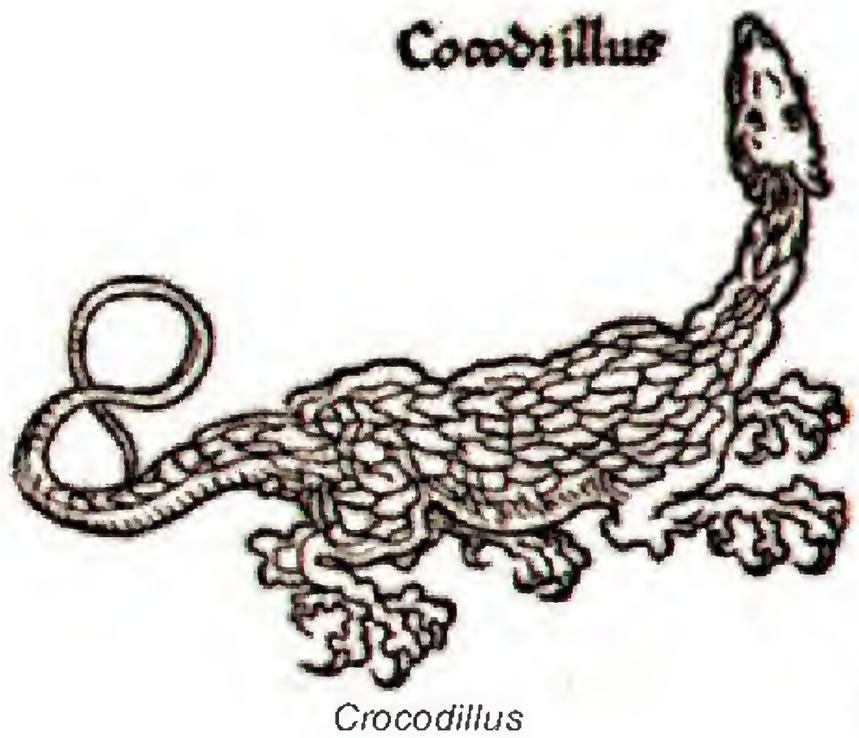
Giants

Year: 1678
Scientist/artist: Athanasius Kircher
Originally published in: Mundus Subterraneus
Now appears in: Fossils: Evidence of Vanished Worlds by Yvette Gayrard-Valy and Athanasius Kircher by Joscelyn Godwin
People found gigantic fossil bones long before they could determine with much accuracy what those bones had been. The obvious — and original — diagnosis was that the big bones had belonged to giants. Remains of the biggest fellow shown here were allegedly found in a cave in 1401 and originally described by Giovanni Boccaccio. In Mundus Subterraneus, Kircher wrote of the giant, "Standing he would have been 200 cubits high, but alas, his corpse fell to dust at a touch and only a few monstrous teeth remained to be piously preserved in a nearby church." Kircher was said to dispute Boccaccio's gigantic claims, however, at the very least reducing his giant's height to a mere 30 feet. In the image, the itty-bitty creature next to the giant's left ankle is a regular-sized man; the second-littlest is Goliath.

Femur fragment

Year: 1676
Scientist/artist: Robert Plot
Originally published in: The Natural History of Oxfordshire
Now appears in: The Dinosaur Papers edited by Weishampel and White
This bone may not look monstrous, but it was attributed to a monster. Robert Plot accurately identified this is the distal end of a femur (the end of the femur that points toward the foot). At first he guessed it might belong to an elephant, but after considering how unlikely it was for elephants to ever have been in England, he guessed that it belonged to a giant.

Year: 1486
Artist: Erhard Reuwich
Originally published in: Perigrinationes ad Terram Sanctam



Crocodillus

Now appears in: The Lore of the Unicorn by Odell Shepard

Reuwich included this animal, perhaps a crocodile, along with other beasts "truthfully depicted as we saw them in the Holy Land." A medieval bestiary described the "Crocodryllus" as a 30-foot-long Nile-dwelling creature armed with "horrible teeth and claws." The bestiary continued, "Hypocritical, dissolute and avaricious people have the same nature as this brute — also any people who are puffed up with the vice of pride, dirtied with the corruption of luxury, or haunted with the disease of avarice . . ."

Basilisk

Year: 1672

Scientist/artist: Georg Wedel

Originally published in: Ephemerides

Now appears in: The Feejee Mermaid by Jan Bondeson

Believed to kill merely with a glance, the basilisk was sometimes described as resembling a small snake, but more often as a two-legged, winged creature. Naturally, it had an unusual mode of generation: the basilisk would spring from an egg that had been laid by an old cock and hatched by a toad — all of this carried out in a dunghill. While the basilisk was mythical, some notions leading to its image weren't entirely delusional. Old hens, still capable of laying eggs, could occasionally take on the outward appearance of roosters. And parasitic worms that found their way into eggs may have caused unappetizing basilisk baby "sightings" at breakfast.

Basilisk

Year: 1511

Appears at: Basilisk Supporting the Arms of the City of Basel © The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Also discussed in: Fabulous Beasts by Joseph Nigg

Bestiaries and broadsides weren't the only places where fantastic creatures thrived. They also appeared in heraldry. Joseph Nigg writes that early heraldic artists "accepted the griffin, dragon, and other fantastic hybrids as actual beasts." He also explains that "by the time certain animals were rejected as fabulous, images of those creatures has already been established on coats of arms of the most respected families and institutions of Europe." In the 17th century, Sir Thomas Browne, an early skeptic of such outlandish creatures, placed the basilisk in the dubious category.

Year: 1664-1678

Scientist/artist: Athanasius Kircher

Originally published in: Mundus Subterraneus

Deformed rooster

Now appears in: Athanasius Kircher's Theatre of the World by Joscelyn Godwin
Kircher included in his expansive work on the subterranean world this chimerical creature. Based on an earlier depiction in one of Ulisse Aldrovandi's books, the animal shown in Kircher's book shows something that looks suspiciously like a basilisk, but the animal was said to be merely a deformed rooster residing in the Boboli Gardens of Florence. The serpentine tail suggests artistic enhancement.
Larger image available

Petit lezard

Year: c. 1720
Scientist/artist: Henri Abraham Chatelain
Originally published in: Decorative Images of People and Animals, with a Map of Southern Africa
This picture shows a "Petit Lezard du Cap de Bonne Esperance" from southern Africa. Apparently a very devout lizard, it carried three crosses on its back.

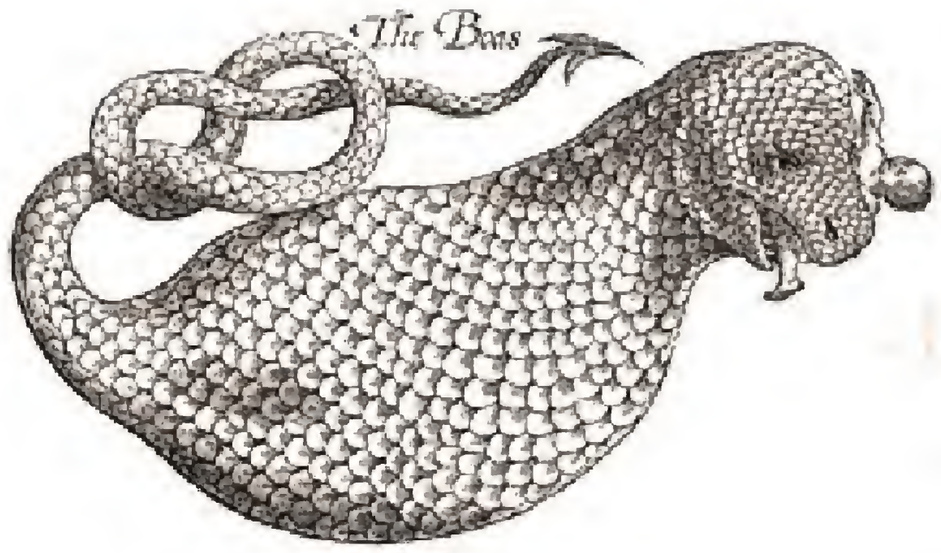
1530. SPiræ epiſcopalis Germaniæ ciuitatis, quæ ad Rhenũ ſita eſt, excitatus à monacho piſcator, ut media nocte per Rhenũ naui cula cum fratribus ſuis eundem monachum duceret, piſcator promiſſa pecunia uictus, nauẽ parauit, ac impoſitos monachos in medium Rheni ratem duxit. Verùm cum atrox tẽpeſtas oria eſſet, nauclerus uitæ periculum timens Deiq; implorãs auxilium, à monachis uerberibus tractatus eſt. Et demum diuino auxilio ad littus uenit, uerum monachus cum ſocijs in conſpectu nauis fllicò euanuit. Nauta uerò ſe recxaminatus, orto die à pu ero domum ductus, eodem die obijt. Hoc ſpectrũ elegã tiſſimo carmine deſcripſit lib. 2. Elegiarũ Georgius Fa binus Brandenburgenſis.

MEnſe Ianuario ſerpens monſtroſus ſeptem ca pitibus coronatis, ac duo bus pedib. inſtar draconis, cuius

Hydra as portent

Year: 1557
Scientist/artist: Conrad Lycosthenes
Originally published in: Prodigiorum ac Ostentorum Chronicon
Now appears in: "Foils and Fakes" by Suzanne Magnanini in Marvels & Tales Magazine
Midway through the 16th century, Lycosthenes published what he believed to be a comprehensive catalog of portents dating back to when God made the world. According to Lycosthenes, the ominous hydra made its appearance in 1530. The Reformation had begun, and the religious turmoil that took hold of Europe might have had something to do with its new glut of monsters. About the time this was published, however, some naturalists eyed the multi-headed creature with skepticism.

Year: 1658
Scientist: Conrad Gesner
Originally published in: History of Four-Footed Beasts and Serpents
Now appears in: Curious Woodcuts of Fanciful and Real Beasts by Conrad Gesner and "Ancient Scientific Basis of the 'Great Serpent' from Historical Evidence" by Richard B. Stothers in Isis June 2004
This illustration, published in London by Edward Topsell long after Gesner's death, shows a boa eating a child. Although it looks completely fanciful, the animal might have had some



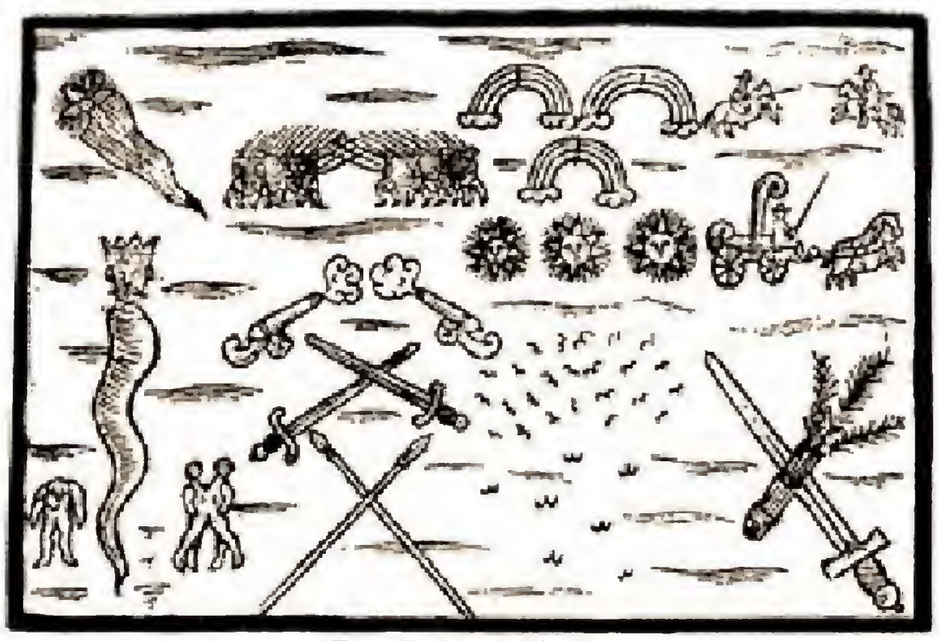
Boa

basis in actual observations extending back to Antiquity. In 256 BC, Roman soldiers deployed to northern Africa reputedly watched in horror as "a reptile of astonishing size devoured many of the soldiers as they went down to the river to get water." Lacking visible feet, the reptile apparently "walked" with its ribs, and nothing the soldiers threw at the beast deterred it until they hurled a large stone at its spine. Large snakes have been known to swallow humans, and Stothers has hypothesized that some snakes might have been somewhat larger and ranged farther in centuries past than they do now. Rumored lengths of 90 feet, however, prompted him to observe, "Antiquity doubtless had its P.T. Barnums, too."

Narrative text and graphic design © by Michon Scott - Updated October 27, 2014

Sea bishop

Printer: Richard Breton
Originally published in: Le Recueil de la Diversité des Habits
Now appears in: "Habits, Holdings, Heterologies: Populations in Print in a 1562 Costume Book" by Ann Rosalind Jones in Yale French Studies
Rondelet's sea bishop found its way into other publications more or less intact, but in the early 1560s, a French printer named Richard Breton tweaked the picture to make it creepier. His sea bishop appeared in a book about the clothing styles of locals and foreigners. The book wasn't really about fashion; it was a substitute for travel to faraway places — understandable considering travel experiences in the 16th century ranged from unpleasant to deadly. As Renaissance and Enlightenment naturalists discovered more exotic animals, they sometimes used familiar analogies to describe what they found, and Rondelet's depiction may (or may not) have belonged to that tradition. At the same time, many Catholics and Protestants utterly despised each other, and clerical-looking monsters were a way of criticizing the followers of the wrong religion. Fervent Protestant Breton made the sea bishop not only uglier than Rondelet's, he also took care to give it more elegant attire (note the embroidery on the creature's upper cape). Did Breton mean for anyone to take this literally? It may have been simple satire, although frightening "prodigies" like this were publicized by Martin Luther and Philipp Melanchthon to warn Catholics that they followed awful leaders.
Larger image available



Prodigious signs

Year: 1638
Originally published in: "A Lamentable List of Certaine Hidious, Frightfull, and Prodigious Signs"
Now appears in: "Unnatural Conceptions: The Study of Monsters in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century France and England" by Park and Daston in Past and Present, August 1981
In 16th- and 17th-century Europe, monsters were rarely viewed in a void, especially when they were considered bad omens. In those times, they were regarded parts of multi-pronged warnings: earthquakes, floods, falling stars. This "lamentable list" shows conjoined twins, a creature with a face on his torso, and what looks like the head of a monarch on the body of a worm, in addition to other disturbing signs. The picture also apparently includes the unfortunate events the bad omens foretell, such as armed conflict. The religious animosities of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation fueled rumors of impossible creatures, as well as fearful interpretations of any kind of birth defect. The invention of the printing press only eased the spread of such scary propaganda. Broadsides — posters that could also be read aloud to the illiterate by hawkers and sold to the literate for about a penny apiece — tended to engage in the most dire interpretations of monstrous apparitions. In fact, religious conflicts between Catholics and Protestants and among different Protestant sects may have sparked even more interest in monsters than had occurred during the Middle Ages. Highbrow and lowbrow

alike took an interest. As religious tensions gradually eased, so did the assumption that any unusual event or deformity necessarily foretold divine wrath.
Larger image available

New World scene

Year: 1671
Scientist/artist: Arnoldus Montanus
Originally published in: De Nieuwe en Onbekende Weereld ("The New and Unknown World")
Now appears in: Arnoldus Montanus' New and Unknown World in Public Domain Review
Arnoldus Montanus's 17th-century book about America bore a long title. Translated into English, it read: The New and Unknown World: or Description of America and the Southland, Containing the Origin of the Americans and South-landers, remarkable voyages thither, Quality of the Shores, Islands, Cities, Fortresses, Towns, Temples, Mountains, Sources, Rivers, Houses, the nature of Beasts, Trees, Plants and foreign Crops, Religion and Manners, Miraculous Occurrences, Old and New Wars: Adorned with Illustrations drawn from the life in America, and described by Arnoldus Montanus. The book also bore elaborate illustrations, though it's debatable whether they were actually drawn from life. This scene, purported to be of the Caribbean, features dragon-headed serpents, belly-dragging quadrupeds that look vaguely mammalian, and flying animals that look like they could be flying fish or giant bugs. In fairness, the book's illustrations weren't entirely inaccurate. Mixed in with unidentifiable creatures were recognizable spoonbills, alpacas or llamas, and an armadillo.

Larger image available

Locust monster

Year: 1594
Artist: Nicolaas de Bruyn
Originally published as: Pictures of Flying Creatures of Many Kinds
Now appears in: Curious Beasts by Alison E. Wright
De Bruyn's engraving of "flying creatures of many kinds" included accurate illustrations of multiple insects. And it included a monster. Intended to be a locust, perhaps the kind dispatched in divine punishments, this creepy little creature is strangely accurate in some respects: The locust has six legs, multiple wings, antennae and a proboscis. The trouble, obviously, is that the six legs are fleshly legs with webbed feet, the head looks vaguely mammalian or reptilian, the antennae look like feathers, and the wings look like bird wings. De Bruyn might have followed instructions to show an animal with six legs, four wings and a proboscis without thinking about the particulars, or he might have copied an earlier image with these mistakes. British Museum curator Alison Wright remarks that this monster "offers particular insight into the hazards of copying."

Expanded image available

Tapestry fragment

Year: 1420-30
Appears at: A Fabulous Beast (Fragment of a Tapestry) © The Metropolitan Museum of Art
From the Metropolitan Museum of Art: "This fragment of a weaving, or *Rücklaken* — a tapestry hung in a domestic interior at frieze level — represents a fabulous composite beast, part horse and part lion, wearing a collar ornamented with small bells that is attached to a leash held by a hand, visible at the left, which is now all that remains of a missing figure. The inscriptions accompanying these creatures on many hangings indicate that they were valued as better company than corrupt townsfolk, and that they symbolize both concupiscence and the unsullied forces of nature. That the creatures are tethered or otherwise subdued suggests that the figures shown with them likewise have tamed their libidinous cravings."
This tapestry continued the tradition of many medieval bestiaries, to present real or fabricated animals based the lessons in morality that they could impart. It also followed a practice that would continue through the Renaissance: combining traits of multiple animals into a single beast.

Bestiary illustration

Year: 1250-1300
Appears at: Medieval Monsters © The British Library
This image presents a trio of monsters, one of which is meeting its end, and another of which has perhaps bitten off too much to chew. All the monsters have just two legs and long, serpentine tails. The monster not partaking of a meal sports two extra heads. The heads look a bit like joeys peering out of a kangaroo mother's pouch, but few Europeans had met marsupials in the 13th century. Perhaps the heads are part of the bigger monster, or perhaps they belong to a recent meal looking for an exit. All that can be said with much confidence is that the monster on the far left is a carnivore.

Century: 15th
Originally appeared in: Book of Hours
Now appears in: Rainbow-Coloured Beasts from 15th-Century Book of Hours in Public Domain Review
Known as a grotesque, this multicolored creature embellished a margin in a 15th-century book of hours. Like other grotesques, it almost certainly wasn't intended to be taken literally. This grouchy-looking little monster is so colorful that its nonexistence is almost a pity.

Book of Hours grotesque

Book of Hours grotesque

Century: 15th
Originally appeared in: Book of Hours
Now appears in: Rainbow-Coloured Beasts from 15th-Century Book of Hours in Public Domain
Review
This colorful grotesque boasts a goat-like body, just one that's missing its front legs. Considering bulk of this creature — including its horned head and what looks like a long, red wattle — hovers over nonexistent legs, its talent for balance is impressive. But like other grotesques in the Book of Hours, this picture probably wasn't meant to be taken at face value.

Manticore

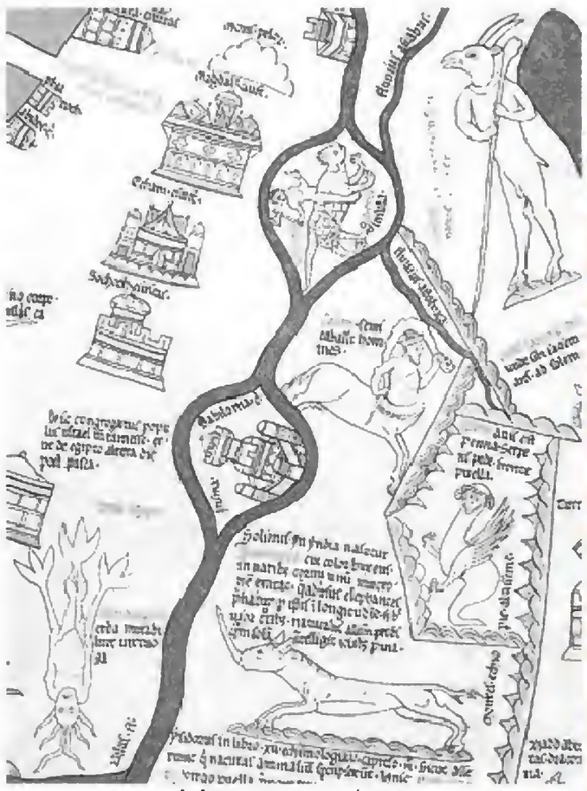
Year: c. 1300
Originally appeared in: Hereford Mappa Mundi
Now appears in: "The Death and Life of the Frontier" by Caspar Henderson in Nautilus
Even in the most tumultuous stretches of the Dark Ages, some lucky Europeans had access to an education, and few of those educated Europeans believed that the earth was flat. But while sailing off the edge of the earth was not such a widespread fear, many medieval Europeans did believe that distant lands held strange creatures: headless people with faces on their chests, bat-like people, people with horses' hooves for feet, and weird animal-human hybrids. The manticore (or manticor) was assumed to have the face of a man, the body of a lion, the tail of a scorpion, the voice of a seductive siren, and three rows of teeth — something like the creepiest used car salesman you could ever meet. This manticore inhabited India in the Hereford Mappa Mundi. The Hereford map followed the convention of the times: Jerusalem was situated at the center, and the far regions with weird creatures lined the map margins. Because this map was made nearly 200 years before Columbus stumbled onto the New World, North and South America didn't appear. Neither did Australia or Antarctica. Still, the belief introduced in Classical times in Terra Australis (a landmass in the Southern Hemisphere) was fairly widespread, even though that landmass hadn't been located with any more success than the manticore.

Year: c. 1777-1784
Artist: Louis Jean Desprez
Appears at: The Chimera (La Chimère de Monsieur Desprez) © The Metropolitan Museum of

Chimera

Art
Material discussed in: Metal Solves Mystery of Flames that Inspired Homer
(http://www.newscientist.com/article/mg22429914.900-metal-solves-mystery-of-flames-that-inspired-homer.html)
From the Metropolitan Museum of Art: "Trained as an architect, Desprez won the Prix de Rome for architecture in 1776 and lived in Italy from 1777 to 1784 where he found employment as an illustrator. In 1784 he left for Stockholm as theatre designer to king Gustav III. Today he is best remembered for his skills as a draftsman. He also made a small number of original etchings, of which La Chimère is both the most accomplished and the most bizarre. The subject is described in a lengthy inscription which appears on the fifth state of the print. Born on the burning sands of Africa, Desprez's mythical beast has three heads: one a bird and two with the features of the devil. The skeletal monster devours its human prey amid the bones of its previous victims framed by the dark semicircle of an archway, the pale semicircle of the moon visible beyond. Even seen against the venerable tradition of demonic creatures in Western art, Desprez's macabre vision is a tour de force of his inventive skills and graphic technique."
In illustrating this beast, Desprez relied on a centuries-old legend. Folklorists credit Homer with creating the chimera, a three-headed fire-breather, in Illiad, and have long tied his inspiration for the beast to a site in southern Turkey named Yanartas ("flaming stone"). The fires that never die out can be explained by methane gas, but scientists long thought that methane arising from inorganic sources could only form at much higher temperatures than those at Yanartas. But a paper published in 2014 explained that ruthenium, a rare metal occurring in the igneous rocks underneath Yanartas, can act as a catalyst for methane formation at lower temperatures. Though the chimera is fantasy, its inspiration may be real rock.

Year: c. 1300
Originally appeared in: Hereford Mappa Mundi
Now appears in: Wonders and the Order of Nature by Lorraine Daston and Katharine Park
(Also discussed in A History of the World in 12 Maps by Jerry Brotton)
The manticore was hardly the only odd creature to stalk the margins of the Hereford Mappa Mundi. The map's representation of Africa had little to do with reality, either of the landmass itself or of its inhabitants. A motley selection of monsters appears in this snippet of the map, including what looks like a human-plant hybrid (lower left) and a monster with a staff (upper right). The farther one got from the familiar, the closer one got to the monstrous, and this



Map monsters

tradition continued long after the Middle Ages.

Map animals

Year: 1529
Scientist/artist: Diogo Ribeiro
Originally appeared in: Ribeiro's world map
Now appears in: A History of the World in 12 Maps by Jerry Brotton
Two years after Columbus sailed to America, the Portuguese and the Spanish settled their differences over who could have what in the newly discovered lands by drawing a north-south line down the Atlantic. What lay west of the line, namely the New World, went to the Spanish. What lay east of the line (outside of Europe), including the coast of Africa and the Indian Ocean, went to the Portuguese. The line-drawing officials apparently didn't wonder whether the inhabitants of these newly acquired regions agreed. And once the Spanish and Portuguese divvied up the Atlantic, they started squabbling over the Moluccas on the other side of the world because with control of the Moluccas came control of the global spice trade. Attempts to clarify the dispute entailed Magellan's circumnavigation of the globe, in which Magellan and most of his sailors died. Other efforts to settle the fight over the Moluccas included mapmaking, and one of the most skilled cartographers in that effort was the mapmaker Diogo Ribeiro. Putting aside the placement of the Moluccas, Ribeiro's 1529 map abounded with winsome creatures. This image includes three scenes from that map. Some of the animals are recognizable, such as the elephant, antelope and some birds. Others are harder to identify. In the top scene, a griffin-like animal squares off with a nondescript quadruped. Ribeiro's map was far ahead of the Hereford Mappa Mundi in accuracy and realism, and yet the fauna of faraway lands still retained mythical qualities.

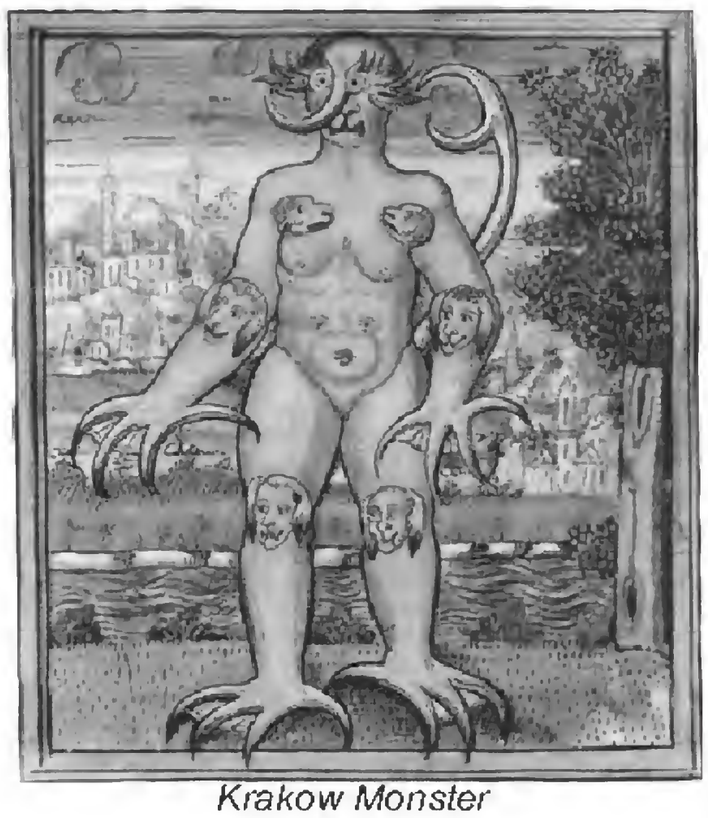
Ichneumon

Year: 1551
Scientist: Conrad Gesner
Originally published in: Historia Animalium
Now appears in: Cultures of Natural History edited by Jardine, Secord and Spary
Today, the term "ichneumon" typically refers to a wasp or, even more exotically, an Egyptian mongoose. To medieval Europeans, however, the ichneumon was the dragon's worst enemy, using a combination of camouflage and cunning to kill that scaly, winged beast. Given mongooses' adversarial relationships with snakes, the ichneumon's story might have had some basis in reality. This picture, however, looks a bit like a porcupine.
Larger image available

Year: 1551
Scientist: Conrad Gesner

Werewolf

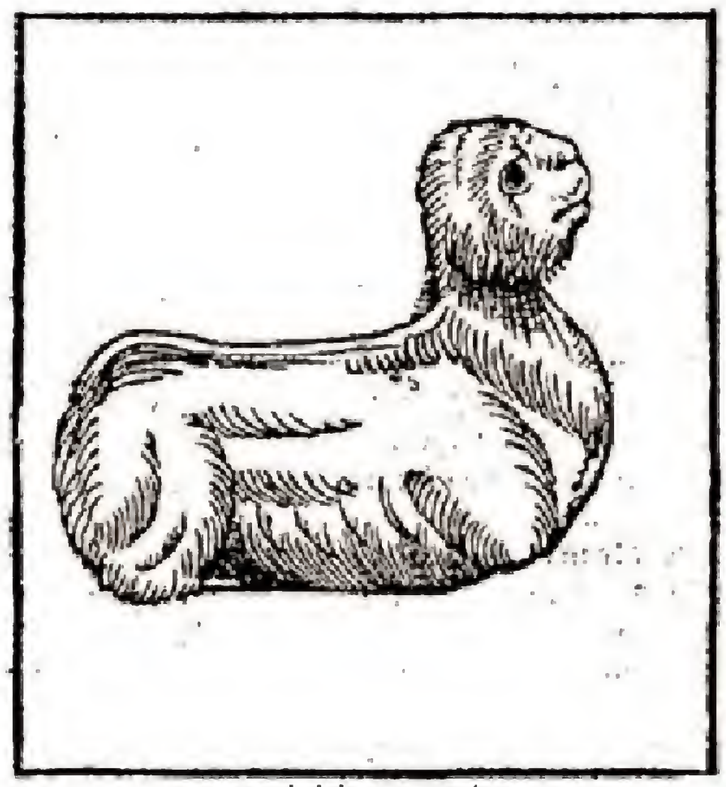
Originally published in: Historia Animalium
Now appears in: Monsters: A Bestiary of the Bizarre by Christopher Dell
Gesner might have believed this creature to be a werewolf. Werewolf legends date back to Antiquity, but the legends varied. Herodotus apparently wrote about a Scythian tribe that turned wolfish en masse every few years, though he might not have believed the story himself. Unlike some monsters that were assumed capable of changing their shape at will, werewolves didn't necessarily have complete control over their appearance. In the Middle Ages, some Europeans thought werewolves might change between wolf and human through the use of ointments or potions. Contact with a werewolf could turn an otherwise vanilla human into one of the loathsome animals (werewolf cooties). If Gesner believed that werewolves switch back and forth between animal and human, perhaps this specimen was caught mid-switch — between a human, a wolf, and apparently a giant chicken.
Larger image available



Krakow Monster

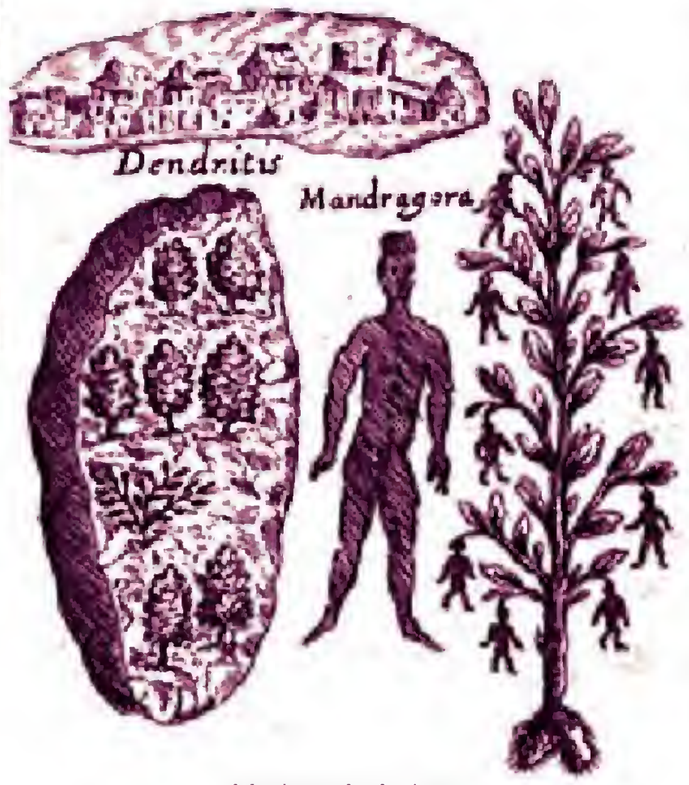
Year: 1559
Scientist/artist: Pierre Boaistuau
Originally published in: Histoires Prodigieuses
Now appears in: Wonders and the Order of Nature by Lorraine Daston and Katharine Park
Within a few decades of Martin Luther's Ninety-Five Theses a new monster made an appearance in Europe. Called the Monster of Krakow (or Cracow), this beast sported heads on its joints — the standard identifier of demonic handiwork. It reputedly died four hours after its birth, but not without warning, "Watch, the Lord cometh." By the time this monster was "born," Luther and Philipp Melanchthon had published pamphlets about other monsters engendered by divine displeasure with the papacy. Convictions that heretical beliefs were on the rise likely played a role in the appearance of this beast.

Year: 1592
Originally published in: "A True Discourse of such Straunge and woonderfull accidents . . . house of M. George Lee of North Aston"
Now appears in: "How to Approach a Monster" by Anna Dunthorne in History Compass, July 2008
Amidst the Reformation, printing presses enabled monster descriptions to spread rapidly across an uneasy Europe. Looking at monster illustrations centuries later, it's not possible to know whether each depiction was based on a real phenomenon or was a complete fabrication. At a time when even storms might provoke fear about the potential wrath of God, a deformity — whether in a human or livestock birth — could raise tensions. Pamphlets and



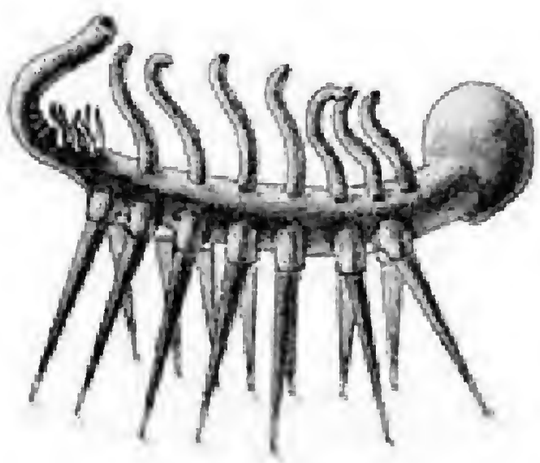
roadside monster

broadsides were fairly cheap to produce, cheap to obtain, and capable of spreading worry. On the other hand, an unusual event might induce delight, or at least morbid curiosity. A 16th-century monster picture might serve the same purpose that an editorial cartoon does today. What a monster should mean often depended on context.



Nature's jokes

Year: 1671
Scientist/artist: Athanasius Kircher
Originally published in: Ars Magna Lucis et Umbrae
Now appears in: "Between Carnival and Lent: The Scientific Revolution at the Margins of Culture" by Paula Findlen in Configurations, Spring 1998
One way to make nature less frightening was to give it a sense of humor. Well-known for his own sense of humor (he liked to dress up cats in little outfits), Kircher was well-suited to this task. His examples of nature's jokes included rocks showing pictures and plants sporting little men. In the end, playfulness like Kircher's didn't prevail, and scientists like Francis Bacon and Robert Hooke stressed the seriousness of scientific pursuits. Good humor was reserved for "vulgar" works directed at the uneducated masses, women and children.



Hallucigenia

Year: 1977
Scientist: Simon Conway Morris
Artist: Marianne Collins
Appears in: Wonderful Life by Stephen Jay Gould. Also discussed in The Crucible of Creation by Simon Conway Morris
If you're thinking this is the worst fabrication in history, think again. In fact, this depiction isn't far from the real thing. In 1909, C.D. Walcott discovered a remarkable fossil locality known as the Burgess Shale, preserving some of the strangest fossils ever found. Paleontologists began reexamining Burgess Shale fossils in the latter half of the 20th century, and identified, among others, Hallucigenia shown here. Simon Conway Morris, who identified Hallucigenia, originally theorized that it might have walked on its seven pairs of spines. Later finds, and studies done by Hou Xianguang and Lars Ramsköld, showed that Hallucigenia actually had seven pairs of big tentacles (not the single set shown here) and probably walked on those while defending itself with menacing spines. In all fairness, Conway Morris's interpretation was based on incomplete data, and he himself pointed out the correction in The Crucible of Creation.

Year: 1572

Overhead and underfoot, plants are often overlooked, or written off as simple compared with animals. But plants have posed plenty of puzzles of their own. Classical scholars made some progress in understanding plant life, but much of this was lost, especially after the destruction of the library at Alexandria. During the Middle Ages, Muslim scholars preserved and added to the knowledge of the ancient Greeks, although Islam forbade making realistic images. With the Renaissance came a reawakening of botany in Europe, along with new discoveries. With a century, explorers and traders brought home 20 times as many new plants as Europe had seen in the last 2,000 years.

Mandrake roots

Year: Between 1406 and 1430
Originally appeared in: Manuscript made in Constantinople
Now appears in: The Naming of Names by Anna Pavord
Feared for its deadly shriek when pulled from the ground, the mandrake was thought to take male or female form. According to an 11th-century Anglo-Saxon manuscript, the mandrake also shined at night like a lamp, and would flee from "an unclean man."

Mandrake uprooted by dog

Year: c. 1450
Originally appeared in: Tacuinum Sanitatis
Now appears in: Tacuinum Sanitatis: An Early Renaissance Guide to Health by Alixe Bovey
It's better to sacrifice your dog's hearing than your own. That might have been the advice imparted by this miniature produced in the mid-15th century. The man has tied a mandrake root to his dog and is already in retreat and covering one ear as the mandrake peeks out of the ground. Like other miniatures in Tacuinum Sanitatis, this picture uses an interesting convention: The scene appears at the edge of a crumbling cliff. Another scene from the same book shows a rice shop, also at the edge of a precipice.

Year: 1481
Originally appeared in: Herbarium Apulei Platonici
Now appears in: "From Theophrastus and Dioscorides to Sibthorp and Smith: background and origin of the Flora Graeca" by William T. Stearn in Biological Journal of the Linnean Society December 1976 issue
This Renaissance print featured a tiny-yet-brave-looking dog tied to a giant, headless mandrake.
Larger image available

Onica tree

Adams
People not only believed the Onica tree wept, they also believed than when it did, it made onyx.

Incensaria and Narcissus

Year: 1491
Originally appeared in: Hortus Sanitatis
Now appears in: Picturing the Book of Nature by Sachiko Kusukawa
This 1491 edition of Hortus Sanitatis featured woodcuts with colors applied after printing.
The plants pictured are incensaria (left) and narcissus (right). The heart-shaped insets and the little men probably don't strike a modern reader as useful features of botanical illustration, but this edition of the famous book probably wasn't designed to be taken into the field to help identify plants. Instead, the illustrations might have been visual clues to help the reader memorize the plants' characteristics, with the hearts maybe reminding the reader of that plant's heart-shaped leaves, and the little men perhaps looking like they admired their own reflections.

Duplicate woodcut

Year: 1540
Scientist: Theodore Dorsten
Publisher: Christian Egenolff
Originally appeared in: Botanicon
Now appears in: Picturing the Book of Nature by Sachiko Kusukawa
Frankfurt publisher Christian Egenolff was a shrewd businessman who appropriated pictures and passages from other books, reassembled them into cheaper editions, and made a tidy profit. He cared less about accuracy than he did about money, and these pictures illustrate why. An identical woodcut is used to illustrate two completely different plants: atriplex and mercurialis. Egenolff's actions may have been galling to the people whose work he reused, but at the time, it wasn't necessarily illegal; copyright laws wouldn't be commonplace for many years. Still, contemporary botanist Leonhart Fuchs pointed to Egenolff's herbals as evidence that his own books were worth more money if the reader wanted reliable information.
Larger image available

Year: 1551
Scientist/artist: William Turner
Originally published in: A New Herball
Now appears in: Eating Right in the Renaissance by Ken Albala

Cucumber

This was a pretty accurate depiction of the cucumber, though when it was published, Europeans held what we would likely consider an irrational fear of consuming cucumbers. One reason for this was that, before the process of digestion was well understood, people feared that fruits and vegetables might spoil inside the body just as they did outside the body. The spoiled foods then carried trouble to every last part of the poor person who had eaten them.

Apple bark face

Year: 1668
Scientist/artist: Ulisse Aldrovandi
Originally published in: Dendrologia
Now appears in: The Eye of the Lynx by David Freedberg
Aldrovandi's posthumously published book showed this piece of apple bark with an uncanny resemblance to a human face. A little too uncanny, in fact. In the 16th and 17th centuries, savants were still trying to figure out the details how life forms reproduced and what made fossils. One common idea was of a "plastick virtue" — a creative force that fashioned all kinds of weird objects. Such a force might make a human-looking face in apple bark. Or an artist simply might draw it.

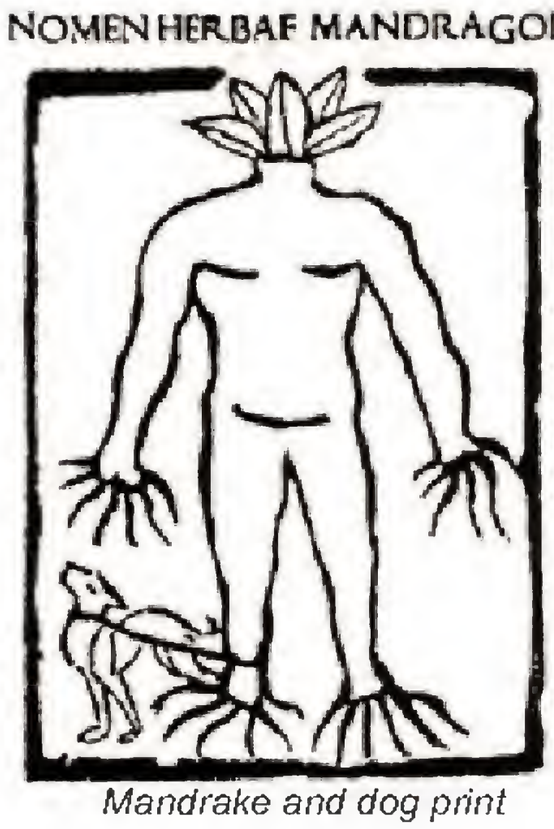
Scorpion-root plant

Year: 1591
Scientist/artist: Giambattista Della Porta
Originally published in: Phytognomonica
Now appears in: The Birth and Development of the Geological Sciences by Frank Dawson Adams
Popularized by the Renaissance polymath Paracelsus (but dating all the way back to Antiquity) the doctrine of signatures held that plants offered clues to their usefulness by resembling the body parts they could heal or problems they could fix. Della Porta, a believer in signatures, published several examples in his Phytognomonica. In this case, the aconite plant, with roots resembling scorpions, could heal the nasty creature's sting.
Larger image available

Year: c. 1224
Originally appeared in: Manuscript made in Baghdad
Now appears in: The Naming of Names by Anna Pavord
Instead of a root, this "bramble" emerges from a bulb, and a bulb with a wolf's tail at that. Hard to recognize from the images alone, the plants in this manuscript had to be discerned in a large part from the written descriptions.

Bramble

Narrative text and graphic design © by Michon Scott - Updated November 23, 2014



Mandrake and dog print

Modest lady mandrake

Year: 1497
Originally appeared in: Ortus Sanitatis (or Hortus Sanitatis)
Now appears in: "From Theophrastus and Dioscorides to Sibthorp and Smith: background and origin of the Flora Graeca" by William T. Stearn in Biological Journal of the Linnean Society December 1976 issue
Mandrakes may have been murderous screamers, but at least this female mandrake was ladylike enough to cover her naughty parts. Different versions of Ortus Sanitatis were published in different cities. This illustration appeared in a version from Strasbourg.
Larger image available

Papaya arbor

Year: 1671
Scientist/artist: Arnoldus Montanus
Originally published in: De Nieuwe en Onbekende Weereld ("The New and Unknown World")
Now appears in: Arnoldus Montanus' New and Unknown World in Public Domain Review
Intended to educate Europeans about the strange lands across the Atlantic Ocean, De Nieuwe en Onbekende Weereld contained a mixture of accuracies and inaccuracies. Reliable depictions of New World flora and fauna float like tiny islands of accuracy in a big sea of error. In a chapter headed "Canibales Eilanden" (the book shows a picture of natives cooking up other humans on a spit) Montanus included this illustration. Roughly accurate spoonbills are recognizable in the foreground but get a load of the leaves in the papaya arbor in the background.
Larger image available

Year: c. 512
Originally appeared in: Juliana Anicia Codex
Now appears in: "Rubus Iconography: Antiquity to the Renaissance" by Kim Hummer and Jules Janick in ISHS Acta Horticulturae 759.
In the early sixth century, the citizens of Honorata presented Princess Juliana Anicia with a beautifully illustrated manuscript. Containing nearly 500 folios, the manuscript provided detailed illustrations evidently based on careful observations. This illustration is one of the oldest surviving illustrations of the subgenus Rubus, or European blackberry plants. Despite some technical errors (flowers shown here have six or seven petals whereas the actually plant has just five), this illustration was far superior to what would follow centuries later.

Batos

Leech book blackberry

Year: c. 920
Originally appeared in: Leech Book of Bald
Now appears in: "Rubus Iconography: Antiquity to the Renaissance" by Kim Hummer and Jules Janick in ISHS Acta Horticulturae 759.
Science didn't always progress. Sometimes it regressed. Following the impressive accuracy of manuscripts from Antiquity, medieval manuscripts used crude renderings bearing little resemblance to the plant in question. Like the illustration from Juliana Anicia Codex, this picture shows a blackberry plant, though it is hardly recognizable. Leech Book of Bald was an Anglo-Saxon herbal and a sort of reference book for physicians, mixing a combination of herbal lore and superstition. It advised, "Against dysentery, a bramble of which both ends are in the earth take the newer root, delve it up, cut up nine chips with the left hand and sing three times the Miserere mei Deus and nine times the Mater Noster, then take mugwort and everlasting, boil these three worts and the chips in milk till they get red, then let the man sip at night fasting a pound dish full."

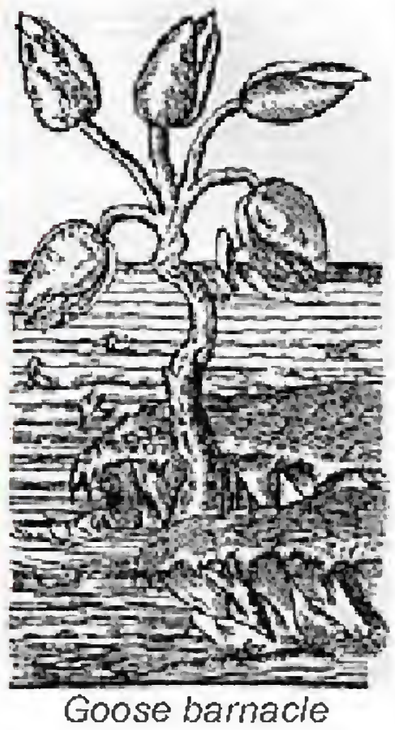
Palm tree

Year: c. 1270
Originally appeared in: Medieval manuscript
Now appears at: A Palm Tree Digital image courtesy of the Getty's Open Content Program
When we think of mistakes Europeans made about organisms living far away, we usually think of animals, but misconceptions extended to plant life, too. This palm tree is green from the leaves all the way down to the roots. The leaves look more like oak leaves than anything that would appear on a palm tree, and they all neatly cluster into the shape of a giant leaf. Perhaps this tree's overall shape was driven more by the design of the page than by the artist's belief of what a palm tree would look like. But it's also quite possible that the artist never set eyes on an actual palm. Although palm trees are not uncommon in southern Europe, this manuscript is from Flanders.

Year: 1478
Scientist: Conrad von Megenberg
Publisher: Hans Bamler of Augsburg
Originally published in: Buch der Natur
Now appears in: The Naming of Names by Anna Pavord
After Gutenberg invented the first working movable type in Europe, scholars had the opportunity to marry woodcuts and new text to expand understanding of plants. In the words of science writer Anna Pavord, "It didn't happen." In this stylized illustration, the plants bore little resemblance to anything in the real world, and the text, written in the 14th century, was already more than a century out of date when it finally appeared in print. Although woodcuts

Plants

were often used to great effect, they were crude tools compared with an artist's brush.



Goose barnacle

Year: 1597
Scientist: John Gerard
Originally published in: Herball
Now appears in: The Eye of the Lynx by David Freedberg and The Naming of Names by Anna Pavord
Barnacles are actually crustaceans, but at the beginning of the 17th century, the goose barnacle was believed to spring from froth produced by old pieces of wood. Next, it became a fungus, then it became a shell, which would spit out a bird, feet first. According to Gerard, the bird was "a foule, bigger than a Mallard, and lesser than a goose." In fact, some of Gerard's contemporaries found his Herball to be "full of errors" before it was even published. One defense that can be offered for Gerard was that he was a gardener, not a scholar, with a genuine love of plants.

Iris woodcut

Year: 1633
Scientist: John Gerard
Originally published in: Herball
Now appears in: The Plant Hunters by Carolyn Fry (Also discussed in The Jewell House by Deborah Harkness)
Gerard released an updated and expanded version of Herball in 1633, including the iris woodcut seen here. During the initial printing process for his book, the printers received the unwelcome news that Gerard had appropriated material from another naturalist, Mathias de L'Obel, who was quite unhappy about it. Copyright law was far in the future, so that news alone wouldn't stop the printing, but even more unwelcome news was that Gerard's book was full of mistakes, which could hamper sales. The printers took the bold step of hiring L'Obel to correct errors, but when Gerard learned about the arrangement, he kicked L'Obel off the project. Gerard was hardly universally loved or admired by his contemporaries, but, in the eyes of history, he won. He is remembered today as a great naturalist.
Expanded image available

Year: 1614
Artist: Crispijn van de Passe the Younger
Originally published in: Hortus Floridus
Now appears in: The Plant Hunters by Carolyn Fry
Hortus Floridus paid homage on its title page to Carolus Clusius, a gardener in the service of the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian II. Clusius played a huge role in popularizing tulips — native mostly to Central Asia — in Europe. Clusius experimented with growing the flowers, and later made a practice of sending bulbs to friends. In 1601, he published a treatise on the

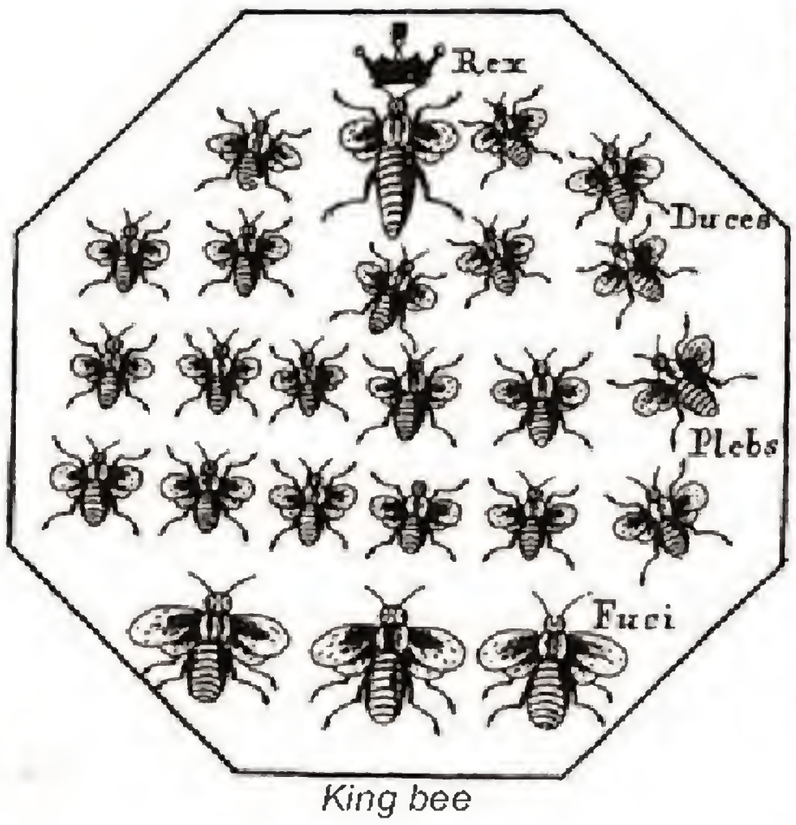
Tulip

prized flowers. Tulip became investments, and their prices soared before the bubble burst, leaving some investors ruined by tulipomania. Something that made tulips so enticing was their unpredictability; plain flowers could change from plain and simple to multicolored and complicated. In fact, the prized flowers suffered from a disease carried by aphids.
Larger image available

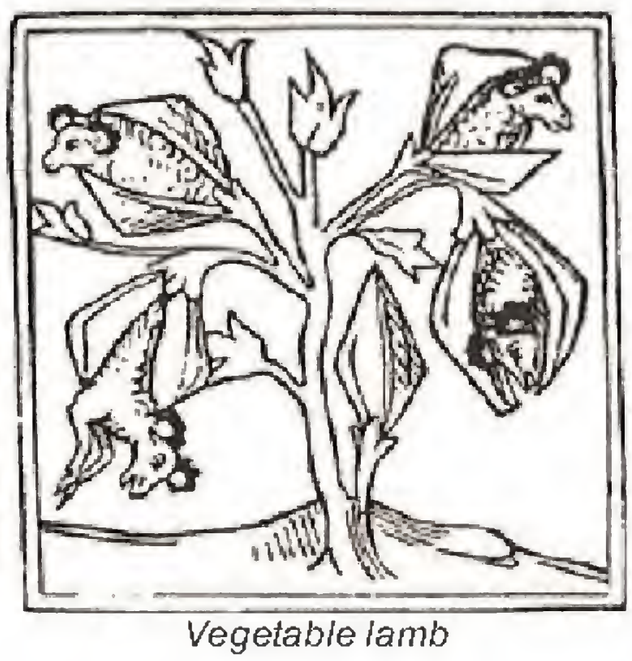
Tobacco

Year: 1881
Supervising scientist: Richard Owen
Now appears in: Natural History Museum, London
Discussed in: The Gilded Canopy by Sandra Knapp and Bob Press
Panels with botanical illustrations have graced the ceiling of the central hall in London's Natural History Museum since it opened in 1881. With their simple lines and flat colors, the stylized illustrations resemble big woodcuts, but they accurately depict plants important to Britain and its 19th-century empire. This ceiling panel shows the leaves and blooms typical of tobacco. But although the Natural History Museum depicted it accurately, human mistakes surrounded the plant from the time Europeans took a fancy to it. Spaniards brought tobacco back to Europe from the New World when Europeans still believed that four "humors" (blood, phlegm, black bile and yellow bile) determined health and even personality. Considered hot and dry, tobacco was believed to be a good treatment for cold, phlegmy illnesses, and for aristocrats who had overindulged at the dining table. Elizabethans were also intrigued by the typical mode of taking tobacco: inhaling it directly into the lungs. But while tobacco made some lucky landowners very rich, it increased the demand for labor, especially slaves. Besides planting and harvesting this demanding crop, slaves also had to clear forest to establish new fields because tobacco quickly exhausted the soil. Centuries after Europeans started shipping slaves to tend tobacco crops, the plant's users continued to pay a steep price, namely with their lungs.

Year: 1679
Scientist/artist: Moses Rusden
Originally published in: A Further Discovery of Bees
Now appears in: Man and the Natural World by Keith Thomas
Besides plants, agriculturalists thought about their pollinators, and many looked to nature for justification of how human society was ordered. Monarchists happily pointed to bees as a natural example of "regal power." But "Rex" is a term for a male monarch. One 18th-century encyclopedia sheepishly explained that the term "Queen-Bee" replaced "King-Bee." Here we see a king bee and associated plebeians. An example of good breeding, many also believe, bees simply wouldn't produce for owners who were quarrelsome or unchaste.
Larger image available



King bee


Vegetable lamb

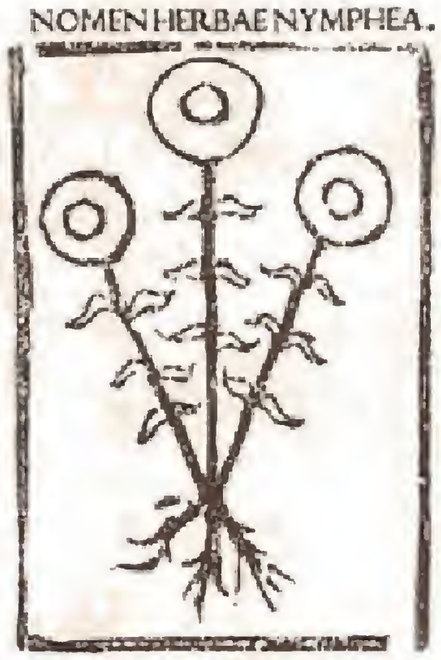
Year: c. 1356
Scientist: Sir John Mandeville
Originally published in: Travels
Now appears in: The Book of Fabulous Beasts by Joseph Nigg
Of one exotic land he visited, Mandeville (or the writer claiming to be Mandeville) wrote, "And there groweth a manner of fruit, as though it were gourds. And when they be ripe, men cut them atwo, and men find within a little beast, in flesh, in bone, and blood, as though it were a little lamb without wool. And men eat both the fruit and the beast." First accepted as a reliable account, Mandeville's book was eventually written off as fiction.

Cotton

Year: 1881
Supervising scientist: Richard Owen
Now appears in: Natural History Museum, London
Discussed in: The Gilded Canopy by Sandra Knapp and Bob Press
John Mandeville's 14th-century account of the hairless, yummy vegetable lamb wasn't the only odd story of a lamb-plant hybrid in medieval Europe. European explorers who visited Asia and the Middle East returned with stories of the Scythian lamb. The explorers claimed that lambs sprouted from the ends of branches, grazed on the grass underfoot and, once they had eaten up all the grass they could reach, died and apparently willed their wool to the plant. As silly as this sounds today, it provided an explanation of how a plant could bear fibers so similar to wool. By the time this stylized panel was placed on the ceiling of London's Natural History Museum, the lamb-plant legend had long been laid to rest.

Year: c. 1481
Publisher: Johannes Philippus de Lignamine
Originally published in: Apuleius Platonicus
Now appears in: The Naming of Names by Anna Pavord
Though water lilies were exotic plants, naturalists with an interest in them generally knew what they looked like by the late 15th century. The maker of this woodcut, evidently, did not. To the woodcut maker, a water lily looked like a modern lollipop.

Year: 1530-1536
Scientist: Otto Brunfels
Artist: Hans Weiditz

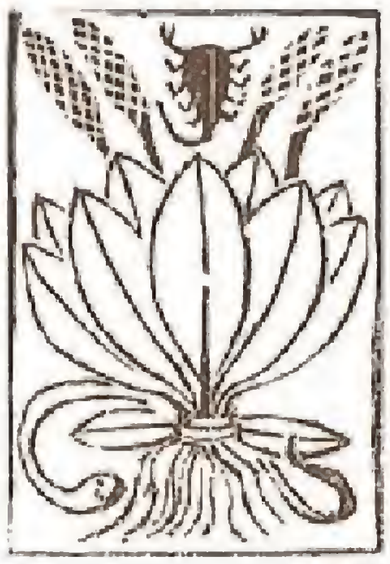


Lolipop water lilies

Larger image available

Pasque flower

Originally published in: Herbarum Vivae Eicones
Now appears in: The Naming of Names by Anna Pavord
By the 16th century, at least some woodcuts had improved — immensely. Brunfels didn't want to include this illustration of the pasque flower in his herbal since it had no known use to apothecaries. Useful or not, the plant's inclusion meant the incorporation of an exceptionally accurate illustration by Weiditz, a student of the talented and rigorous Albrecht Dürer.

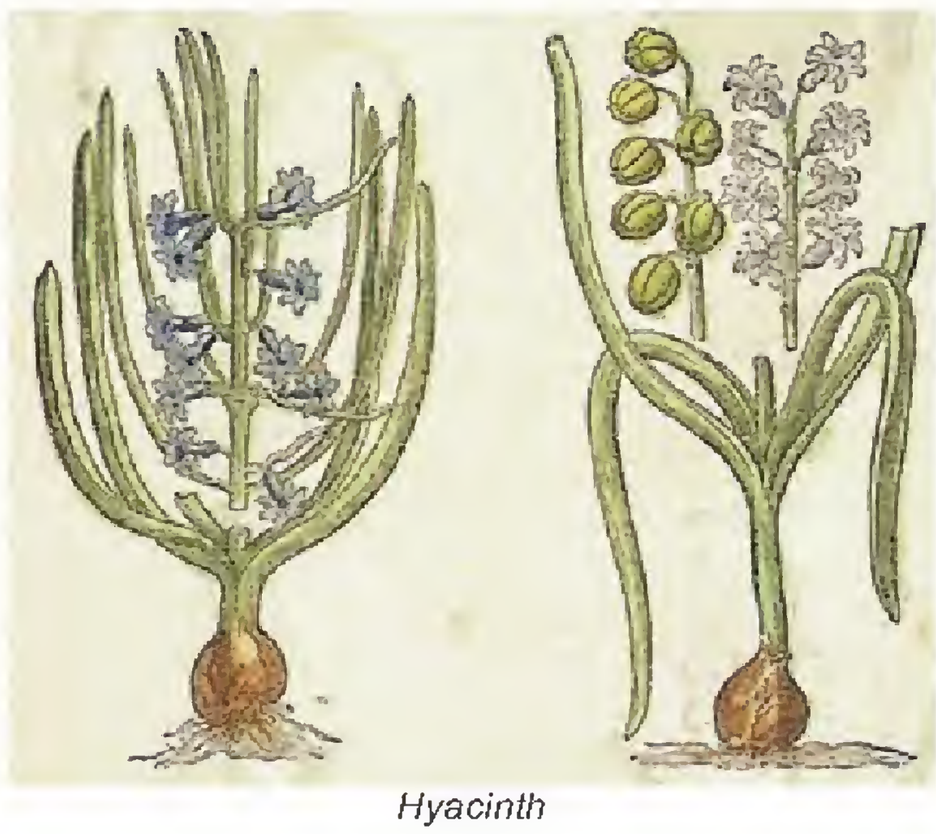


Plantago and scorpion

Year: 1485
Originally published in: Gart der Gesundheit
Now appears in: The Science of Describing by Brian W. Ogilvie
Another example of a plant depiction ruined by convention is this illustration of Plantago. Although woodcuts limited what artists could accurately illustrate, Ogilvie has speculated that the same artist may have designed, at about the same time, an accurate depiction of a rose in a different publication. The convention of representing a simplified plant — complete with decorative scorpion — rendered this picture nearly useless.

Plantago

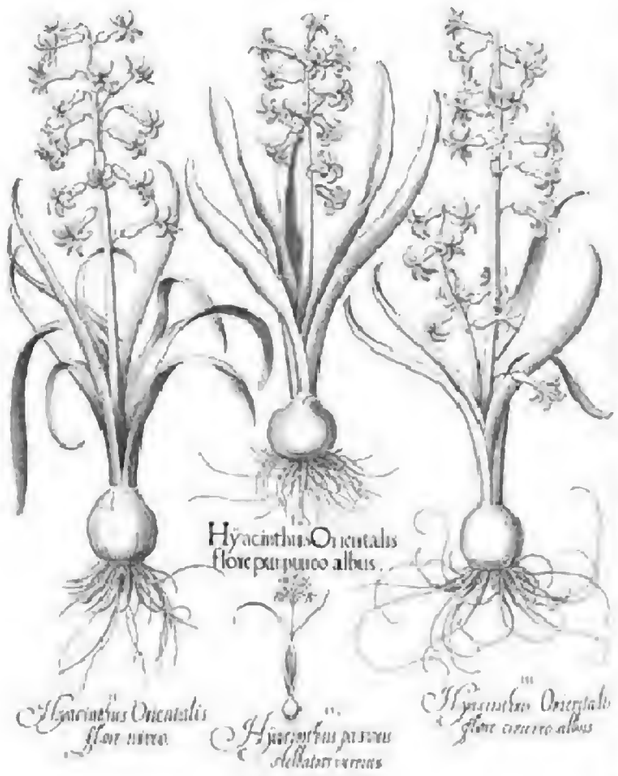
Year: 1542
Scientist: Leonhart Fuchs
Originally published in: De Historia Stirpium
Now appears in: The Science of Describing by Brian W. Ogilvie
Dropping the scorpion and the stylized depiction, Fuchs produced a much more accurate picture of Plantago decades later.



Hyacinth

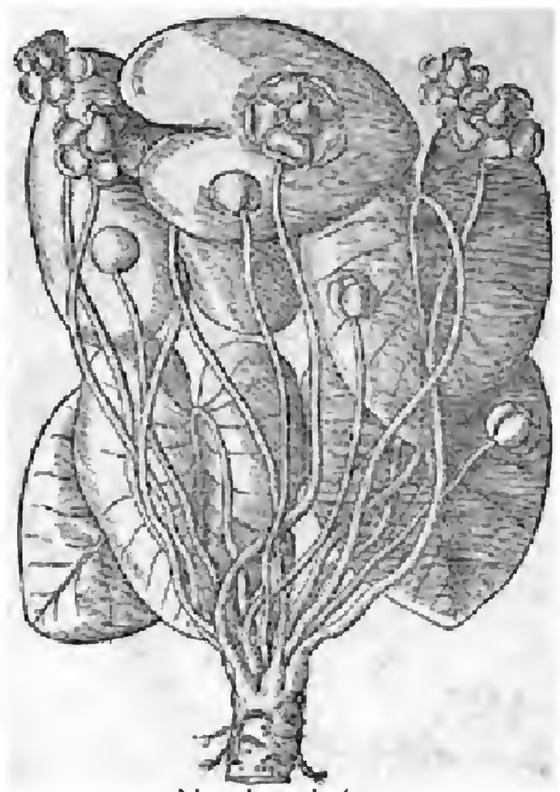
Year: 1636
Scientist/artist: John Gerard
Originally published in: Herball
Now appears in: Amazing Rare Things by Attenborough, Owens, Clayton and Alexandratos
More plausible than the goose barnacle was Gerard's hyacinth. This image, although nicely colored, results from a woodcut. Woodcuts varied in quality, and although many of them were

better than illustrations that had occurred before, they were crude compared to engravings.

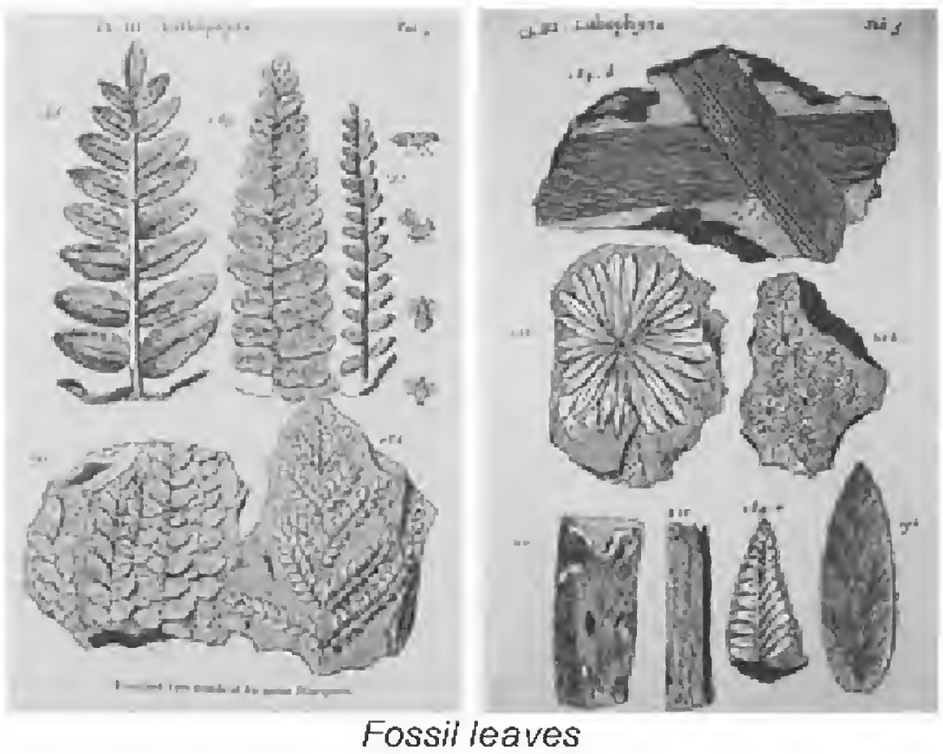


Hyacinth

Year: 1613
Scientist/artist: Basilius Besler
Originally published in: Hortus Eystettensis
Now appears in: Amazing Rare Things by Attenborough, Owens, Clayton and Alexandratos
While some authors still relied on woodcuts, others had moved on to more expensive but detailed engravings. Several different printmakers engraved the Hortus Eystettensis, rendering plants such as the hyacinth in remarkable detail, a considerable improvement over what had come before and even what continued to be published for some time afterwards.


Nuphar lutea

Year: 1585
Scientist/artist: Pierandrea Mattioli
Originally published in: Herbal
Now appears in: The Eye of the Lynx by David Freedberg
This dainty illustration shows a lovely plant, just not with much accuracy. In the 16th century, only a small number of botanists and artists produced truly accurate illustrations. Most woodcuts were decorative rather than informative.


Fossil leaves

Year: 1699
Scientist: Edward Lhwyd
Originally published in: Lythophylacii Britannici ichnographia
Now appears in: "From the Rise of the Enlightenment to the Beginnings of Romanticism (Robert Plot, Edward Lhwyd and Richard Brookes, MD)" by Richard Wilding in Geological Society, London, Special Publications 2005
Exactly what fossils were, how they formed, and how leaves could wind up embedded in rocks were questions that nagged naturalists at the dawn of the 18th century. Although Leonardo da Vinci, Niels Stensen (Steno), Robert Hooke, Agostino Scilla and John Ray had all correctly surmised that fossils were the remains of once-living organisms, other interpretations still circulated. Edward Lhwyd was the second keeper, or curator, of the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford, and like his predecessor Robert Plot, he believed that fossils owed their existence to some sort of generative force in the rocks. Despite that erroneous interpretation, Lhwyd did make some breakthroughs. He rejected the still-popular explanation that fossils all resulted

from the Noachian flood, and he observed that "Plants (whatever may be their origin) are distinguishable into *species,* as those produced in the Surface." Right he was. This engraving from his work shows his careful attention to fossil details. Part of what puzzled Lhwyd was that the rock-encased species he found bore no resemblance to anything living in the vicinity. Fossils perplexed not just because they were in the middle of rock layers, but because they usually belonged to species long extinct.
Larger image available

Trees

Year: 1844
Scientist: August Goldfuss
Artist: Christian Hohe
Originally published in: Fossils of Germany
Now appears in: Scenes from Deep Time: Early Pictorial Representations of the Prehistoric World by Martin J.S. Rudwick
As if plants still living weren't tricky enough, fossil plants posed a whole new set of challenges. What's impressive about this picture is how it works around a common problem. Plants shed parts throughout their lives: seeds, branches, cones, and a whole set of leaves each season. As a result, fossil plant parts can be hard to piece together into a single species — many times, different parts of the same plant have been identified as separate species. To avoid almost certain error in reassembling fossil plants, Goldfuss had his artist collaborator cut off the tops of the trees and show only leaf litter on the ground. Which leaves went with which trunks was anybody's guess. This depiction of "the Coal Period" also shows marine invertebrates — not in their natural habitat, but instead assembled neatly on shore, waiting patiently to fossilize.

Siegesbeckia orientalis

Year: 1738
Scientist: Linnaeus
Artist: Jan Wandelaar
Originally published in: Hortus Cliffortianus
Now appears in: Linnaeus by Wilfrid Blunt
This isn't an error. In fact, plant is represented quite accurately. It does, however, represent a practice that probably wouldn't be allowed today. When Linnaeus announced his discovery that plants reproduce sexually, some of his contemporaries responded with shock and awe. And contempt. One of them, Johann Siegesbeck, and academic living in St. Petersburg, wondered, "Who would have thought that bluebells, lilies and onions could be up to such immorality?" Linnaeus got even, namely by naming this weed Siegesbeckia orientalis. Using the Linnaean system to insult rivals by naming unpleasant species after them is now frowned upon. On the bright side, some herbalists have credited this weed with erasing stretch marks, a fact that Siegesbeck might (or might not) have found flattering.

Year: 1497
Originally appeared in: Hortus Sanitatis
Now appears in: The Birth and Development of the Geological Sciences by Frank Dawson

Residents fearing they angered the village god, swore off meat and alcohol and held vigils after five unexpected deaths at regular intervals. Rationalists in India despair at such beliefs. Reporting from Amloha Village, India - Some say it was the prayers, others the all-night vigils, still others the three days without meat or alcohol. Whatever it was that foiled the angry god, residents in this village of about 600 breathed a huge sigh of relief Thursday when the day passed without another death.

"We were so scared," said Kuldeep Singh, 32, village head. "Now we feel better."

Amloha has been on a knife's edge since late December when the first person died mysteriously. In the last few months, four others followed at fairly regular intervals, in a place where years go by without a funeral. All the dead were apparently healthy, died suddenly and displayed no clear cause of death.

The interval between the last two deaths was 17 days, prompting some to wait nervously to see what would happen Thursday, 17 days later.

Superstition enjoys a long and rich history in India. Although some of these practices may seem poetic to outsiders, says Sanal Edamaruku, president of the New Delhi-based Indian Rationalist Assn., they can have deadly consequences. Diseases go untreated, disabled children are buried up to their necks during eclipses, infants are tossed from balconies and caught to ward off evil, he said.

"Critical thinking is lacking," said Edamaruku, who has tried for the last 25 years to bust myths, slay ghosts and quell mass hysteria, but acknowledges that it's a daunting task.

"That's the irony of India. We're a rising power held back by 15th century beliefs."

Among the factors, experts said, include insufficient education, the reverence of ancient texts laced with fantastical stories sometimes taken literally and a desire to understand the seemingly inexplicable.

"When something goes wrong, it's easy to fall back on belief in the mysterious, which absolves you of responsibility," said Harish Shetty, a social psychiatrist at Nityanand Clinics in the western city of Mumbai. "India has great engineers, but when it comes time for them to marry, they fall into a bundle of superstitions. It's in our psyche."

Roshan Lal, 55, one of Amloha's village wise men, said he looked for rational answers after the spate of deaths but none presented themselves. So he and the rest of the community concluded that the village god, Khera, must be angry.

"I always wanted to believe in science, but now I've concluded this was the work of alternate forces," said Lal, wearing a white saf, or bandanna, as he chatted with other village luminaries. "Our god was angry before, but never like this."

The other time was in 1980, villagers say, when five to 10 people were bitten by snakes in short order.

Mohan Lal, 50, whose son Rahul died unexpectedly June 15, said Khera might be angry because someone put makeup and other cosmetics into their field four days earlier. Or, it could be because someone stored candy in the cremation ground two years ago. Both are taboo.

Kartara Ram's son Dhaarampal died next, on July 3. "It's very painful to lose my son," he said. "I feel like I've died myself."

Villagers point to other evidence. When resident Raman Kumar died July 20, villagers cremated his body and returned two days later to throw the unburned remains into the river in keeping with local custom. To

their horror, however, his skull, other bits and the shroud were missing. Then they realized that it was the day of the solar eclipse.

The mysterious goings-on in Amloha were front-page news Thursday across India. From early morning, the village's single-lane dirt road was clogged with television news crews.

"These TV guys are mad," said Sohan Lal, about 40, navigating around a satellite truck. "There's something wrong with their heads."

Some experts note that in India, superstition can engender mass events and near-hysteria. In 2006, word spread that the water from a creek near a Muslim holy man's grave in Mumbai tasted unusually sweet for saltwater, prompting 10,000 people to show up overnight and hundreds to drink from it.

The rationalist association said it urged people not to drink the water and to wait for tests, as did municipal officials, but most ignored the advice. The water contained hundreds of times the acceptable level of E. coli bacteria due to contamination from sewage and other runoff. Scientists and officials said the change in the water's taste probably was caused by the heavy monsoon rains.

"Even as we try and improve literacy, we often lack scientific literacy despite all the engineers India produces," Edamaruku said. "We'll launch a rocket but have a holy man break a coconut to make sure the timing is auspicious."

On Thursday, elders in Amloha said the deaths have generated the most attention the community had received in its long history. The village of lush rice fields and 20-foot cones of cow dung fuel lies deep in Haryana, one of India's most prosperous states, about a four-hour drive from New Delhi.

"Actually nothing at all has ever happened here before," Singh said.

"We threw the British out in 1947," Mehar Singh Lambardar, 80, who lives with his father whose age no one can recall, told a reporter. "You're probably the first foreigner to visit us here since the English pulled out."

Mark Magnier(LA Times) with Anshul Rana (TOI), 07, Aug 2009

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Superstition keeping Panch seat vacant for 15 years in Rajasthan village   - Hindustan Times

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hindustantimes Superstition keeping Panch seat vacant for 15 years in Rajasthan village

Ramprakash Meel, Hindustantimes.com Sriganganagar , February 20, 2014
First Published: 16:27 IST(20/2/2014) | Last Updated: 16:33 IST(20/2/2014)

The bye-elections for Panch to 18 wards in the district were held on February 14. But, Gram Panchayat 24 ASC went without representation once again. Reason: The fear of death. Villagers quote and Panchayat records confirm that three panchs who were declared elected from here during the past 15 years either died or fell ill severely without completing their tenure. Hence, nobody is willing to risk his life by getting elected as panch from the ward.

Assistant election officer Vedprakash said despite his best efforts, none of 1298 voters was willing to file nomination papers from the ward for fear of death.

One Nanakchand Middha said Karnel Singh was elected panch from here. But, he developed mental illness and was moved to other place. Thereafter Gyanchand Kataria and Vijay Singhla were also elected from the ward. They too died of illness before completing their tenure. This time one Radheyshyam Aggarwal agreed to file the nomination. But, before he could file it, he fell ill and was hospitalised. Later, he refused to contest from the ward, Middha said.
Some other wards too went unrepresented.

But, they didn't have any superstitions attached. In some other cases, only one contestant was there who was elected unopposed. Villagers attribute it to village-specific influence mechanism behind it.
Vedprakash confirmed that there had been no representation from ward no.9 of Sadhuwali in Ganganagar Panchayat samiti either for unknown reasons. Interestingly, ward 22 PS in Raisinghnagar Panchayat Samiti had only one nomination, which was declared invalid.
In many gram panchayats, ward panchs were elected unopposed as they were the only contestants, he said.
Gharasana Panchayat has 320 wards. Bye-elections to 18 wards of the district were held on February 14.

Election of upsarpanchs were also held on Saturday for 22 RJD Gram Panchayat in Gharsana. Ramkumar was declared elected defeating his nearest rival Surendra Kumar.

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Fantastically Wrong: The Angry, Enormous Eagle That Could Carry Off Elephants | WIRED

wired.com

Les marchands cassèrent l'œuf. (Page 117, col. 1.)

cap

Shipmates of Sinbad the Sailor prepare to slaughter a rukh chick. They will pay dearly for their transgression: Let's just say those sweet hats won't do them any good when they're dead. *Image: Wikimedia*

On the 556th evening of successfully not being murdered by her chucklehead king of a husband in the *Arabian Nights*, Scheherazade relates the tale of Sinbad's tanglings with a beast most cruel. Sailing from city to city with merchants, Sinbad eventually comes to a deserted island, where he spies a huge white dome half buried in the beach. His shipmates leave him behind and venture to shore, where they discover that the dome is not a dome at all, but the outsized egg of the rukh, a bird of enormous proportions.

Naturally, Sinbad's shipmates split the egg open and slaughter the huge chick within. Upon seeing this Sinbad shouts, "Stop, stop! Do not meddle with that egg, or the bird Rukh will come out and break our ship and destroy us." Now enter papa and mama rukh—none too pleased, mind you—who chase the men back onto the ship. Then, grabbing boulders with their formidable talons, they proceed to drop them on the boat, blasting it to pieces.

Sinbad survives, but this isn't actually his first encounter with the rukh: Deserted on another island, he'd once escaped by strapping himself to the beast's leg with his turban. Nor was Sinbad the only man to tell such tales. The legend of the rukh, it turns out, has not just a deep history, but perhaps even psychological roots dating back millions of years.

cap

"Hey I can see my house from up here!" *Image: Wikimedia*

This legend began in the Arab world, yet long before the *Arabian Nights* were translated into English, Marco Polo himself once described the rukh, according to Matt Kaplan in his book *Medusa's Gaze and Vampire's Bite: The Science of Monsters*. Its wings, the great explorer wrote, "covered an extent of 30 paces, and its quills were 12 paces long, and thick in proportion. And it is so strong that it will seize an elephant in its talons and carry him high into the air, and drop him so that he is smashed to pieces; having so killed him the bird gryphon swoops down on him and eats him at leisure." He clarifies that the local people call it "ruc," and that it is certainly not the half lion and half eagle griffin "as our stories do relate, but enormous as they be they are fashioned just like an eagle."

With such ridiculous size, one would wonder how exactly two could fit in Noah's ark (to say nothing of the other 9 million species on Earth, but whatever). The problem apparently didn't cross the mind of Elizabethan poet Michael Drayton, who later welcomed aboard "All feathered things yet ever knowne to men / From the huge Rucke, unto the little Wren." And God forbid they'd be seated anywhere near the elephants.

So, exactly what size would the rukh have needed to be to make off with elephants? Luckily, Kaplan

worked out the exact physics, which he calls "a chore." Given that eagles can lift half their body weight, a rukh would need to be 2,000 pounds to lift a 1,000-pound elephant, he claims. After some complicated math that I don't quite grasp because I dropped out of physics in high school, the rukh would need to have a wing area of 800 square feet, making the wingspan 164 feet. Which is a fancy numerical way of saying it isn't possible to have a bird anywhere near the size of the rukh take flight. There's no way it could muster the requisite strength or keep its bones from buckling.

cap

"This would be more tolerable if I could actually see my house from here." *Image: Wikimedia*

Which is not to say that a few real-life flying critters haven't pushed the laws of physics here. *Quetzalcoatlus northropi* (above), an enormous pterosaur of the Cretaceous period and the subject of an awesome NSFW rap, had a wingspan of 33 feet and stood as tall as a giraffe, and probably hunted by ambling on the ground scooping up baby dinosaurs. And there was *Argentavis magnificens*, which lived just 6 million years ago, a sort of giant vulture with a wingspan of 23 feet.

With both of these impressive beasts, there would have been no real maneuverability to speak of, unlike modern eagles and hawks. They were simply too big to be spry. Even keeping such heft aloft would have been a tall order, so *Quetz* and *Argentavis* likely exploited rising columns of hot air called thermals. Indeed, paleontologist Mark Witton claims *Quetz* would have thus been able to hit speeds of 80 MPH and stay aloft for a week at a time.

cap

Argentavis looked like an oversized vulture. Not that there's anything wrong with that. *Image: Wikimedia*

It wasn't these fliers, though, that inspired the legend of the rukh. Even if ancient Arab peoples could have somehow pieced together the fragmentary fossils of either, both species actually lived in the Western Hemisphere. (Incidentally, though, it could well be that the legend of the griffin was inspired by our ancestors finding fossilized specimens of *Protoceratops*, which had beaks resembling those of eagles.) Nor, as Kaplan rightly points out, could the inspiration have been the elephant bird of Madagascar, as Richard Dawkins has suggested. While the bird didn't go extinct until 1030, Europeans and Arabs didn't even get to the island until the 16th century.

There is, though, an extant eagle in Africa, Asia, and Europe called the bearded vulture, or lammergeier, which behaves much like the rukh, Kaplan notes. It's a scavenger, but not a big enough scavenger to swallow a bone whole. So it picks one up, climbs and climbs, then drops the bone on rocks, shattering it into bite-sized bits. The rukh theoretically doing the same thing with an elephant would have been just as effective, if not a bit messier, of course.

So while we may not have a real beast to stand as the inspiration for the rukh, we may well have at least a psychological one. For Kaplan, it was typical scare-mongering. At sea, sailors would have no need to fear the enormous Calydonian boar or Nemean lion, but the rukh could reach them anywhere. And that could well be true, but I'd also propose a more ancient psychological rooting here.

You see, in our not too distant evolutionary past, early humans were hunted by eagles. We know this

from a remarkable *Australopithecus africanus* specimen called the Taung Child, which palaeoanthropologist Lee Berger discovered had the same skull damage as modern monkeys killed by eagles.

Vishnu takes a ride on Garuda, who seems to be foolishly opening up a black hole. This won't end well. *Image: Wikimedia*

He says in a fascinating interview with Radiolab: "Have you ever thought why when you're standing out on a playground or standing out in an open field, and a shadow passes over you, do you know that feeling that occurred, whether it be from an airplane or whatever? First you get that tingly feel on the back of your neck, and then you yank your head up. You ever wondered why you do that? You do that because the little Taung Child died two and a half million years ago because he didn't look up quick enough when that happened."

Could the hyperbolic upscaling of the rukh be a manifestation of this fear? After all, on the other side of the world, the Maori have their own similarly cranky gigantic eagle, the Hakawai. But then again, the Garuda of Hindu mythology looks much the same, but is perfectly pleasant. Kaplan notes, though, that the benevolent Garuda may have arisen from the gratitude the peoples of the Indian subcontinent felt for eagles that hunted poisonous snakes.

So while we have no clear answers here, it's important to appreciate what such mythology says about us as humans. Be careful how you treat us, we seem to say, or we'll write stories about you being mean to Sinbad. And we *love* Sinbad.

Reference:
Kaplan, M. (2012) Medusa's Gaze and Vampire's Bite: The Science of Monsters. Scribner

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In 1802, there was a young man named named Jesse Elliot who lived in the little coastal town of Bath. Elliot was a gambler, a brawler, a drunkard, but most of all he was a racer. Jesse Elliot was the extremely proud owner of fiery black stallion. Elliot would race anyone, anywhere, any time on this strong and swift horse. Many riders challenged Jesse Elliot to a race. And Jesse Elliot always won.

One day, a tall man appeared in the town and approached Elliot, saying he'd heard of his racing fame and of his magnificent black horse. The man said he had a horse he thought was just as strong and just as fast as Elliot's, and that he'd like to try his horse and his skill against Elliot and his stallion.

Elliot quickly agreed, and the two men arranged to meet for the race in one hour. It was a Sunday.

Elliot went home to get his horse. He pulled on his riding boots, threw back a few shots, and prepared for the race. His wife, a devout woman, was alarmed that he was intent on racing on a Sunday.

Elliot scoffed at her. His wife, fed up with her husband's wicked ways, shouted at him as he rode off, "I hope you're taken to Hell this very day!"

When Elliot arrived at the course, he saw the stranger already waiting for him on a midnight black stallion, larger and more fiery than any Elliot had ever seen. And atop that angry horse was the stranger, also dressed all in black, with an evil fire in his eyes that burned fearfully.

Frightened, Elliot paused for a moment, but his greed for racing consumed him and he urged his stallion on, shouting "Take me a winner or take me to hell!"

Elliot's horse charged ahead, and the stranger lagged behind. He seemed to be taking his time, keeping a length behind Elliot and his stallion.

As they neared the finish line, the stranger's horse put on a great burst of speed and drew right along side Elliot. And as soon as it did, Elliot's own horse dug its feet into the grown, throwing Jesse Elliot rider into a tree and killing him instantly.

As for the stranger, it's said that he just laughed, and rode back to his home in Hell with Jesse Elliot's soul astride his black stallion.

Soon after the accident, the minister at St. Thomas Church began preaching about the footprints as an example for the fate that awaits all young sinners.

The footprint's where Jesse Elliot's horse dug its feet into the sand can still be seen to this day. It's said that nothing will grow in those hoofprints, that no bird will eat seed scattered in them, and that nothing left in the tracks will stay there overnight.

The hoofprints made where Jesse Elliot's horse dug its feet into the ground can still be seen today

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The beauty, the journalist, and the Titanic

28December2014

bbc.com

In 1905, British journalist William Stead went to Russia to try to reconcile conservatives and revolutionaries. While there he was entranced by a Russian beauty. Her great-granddaughter, Tatyana Tolstaya, tells the story of a relationship cut off before it began, Stead's death on the Titanic - and a war that was not averted.

My great-grandmother Anastasia Romanovna Krandievskaya was a beautiful woman. She was tall with a slim waist, masses of hair and a pink and white complexion. People turned to look at her, they asked who she was. In her time she was well known as a writer, she considered herself a progressive woman with advanced views, and was proud of the part she played in the revolutionary struggle. In the first Russian revolution in January 1905 she opened a field hospital in her grand Moscow townhouse for those injured in the street fighting. I don't suppose she bound them up herself or prepared the food for them - after all that was what servants were for.

Great-grandmother may not have washed their wounds but she supported their fight against the government with all her heart. She was arrested because of her hospital and spent three whole days in jail - there was something to be proud of! And how proud she was! And how fetching she looked in her white lacy dress and a hat the size of a gateau. She would attend various meetings of philosophical and literary societies, and was admired both by the philosophers and the literati.

> My dear and unexpected friend, we met and parted like ships in the dark night and on the measureless ocean"

In the autumn of 1905 the English journalist William Stead came to Russia. The purpose of his visit was to reconcile progressive Russian society (progressive to the point of frenzied hatred and terrorism) with the intractable monarchist and authoritarian Russian government. He spoke at public meetings in Moscow, and St Petersburg and he went on a lecture tour to the cities of the Volga. Stead rejected violence and hatred, he said, they never came to any good. Listen to each other, he urged, find points of agreement.

Anastasia Romanovna went to one of his lectures and listened very attentively to his conclusions. Although her beauty was brilliant, she was almost completely deaf, and she had to strain and concentrate very hard to hear his words.

Stead noticed the beautiful woman whose eyes were devouring him. Nobody had ever listened to him or looked at him in that way before. After the lecture he intercepted her by the door and seized her by the hands. "Who are you? I want a portrait of you. I want you to write to me, even a few lines. Tell me your address. I want to read your books." "I will send them to

you," answered Anastasia, flattered.

Novelist Tatyana Tolstaya is the daughter of Aleksey Nikolayevich Tolstoy, a writer of science fiction and historical novels from the family of Leo Tolstoy, author of War and Peace and Anna Karenina

The next day he sent her a large bouquet of white flowers: lilies, tuberoses, hyacinths and orchids. "My dear and unexpected friend," he wrote in an accompanying letter. "We met and parted like ships in the dark night and on the measureless ocean, but I will never forget the reflection of your wonderful soul in your eyes. I feel as if I am standing at the foot of the altar to the Russian divine feminine. May the Lord protect you and make me worthy to preserve this memory.

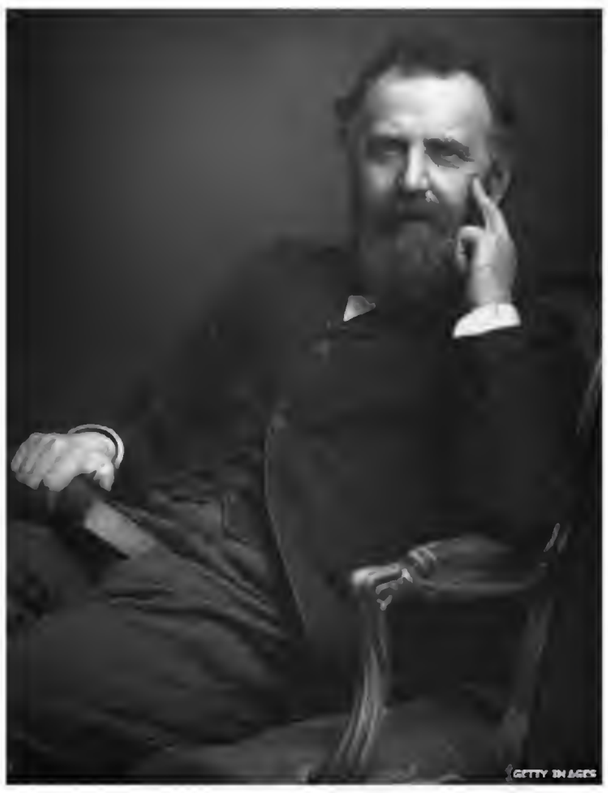
"You too have been in prison. We both belong to that great brotherhood of prisoners. But I know, I believe, that we are linked by more than that. Allow me please to send you these flowers, given to me yesterday by a loving friend. They come to you with a doubled weight of affection."

Anastasia Romanovna was touched and confused by the letter and the flowers, but later that morning, over coffee, she opened the progressive paper in which Stead was vilified: he had sold himself to a bloody regime, he was a provocateur, he had been paid for his troubles and was the tyrants' lackey. How shameful. And Anastasia Romanovna was ashamed of her moment's weakness and she went to the window and threw the flowers with their doubled weight of affection into the street.

A month passed and Mr Stead returned from his tour of Russian towns where he had attempted without success to reconcile the intelligentsia and the government. He was weary and sad, and he came to visit Anastasia Romanovna at home. "Tell me," he said with the help of a translator, "why did you promise to send me your books, and then you never sent them?" "Because I am printed in the progressive press, and you are printed in the conservative newspapers," the deaf beauty answered coldly. "We met quite by chance and we go our separate ways."

William Thomas Stead 1849-1912

- British journalist, editor, and publisher who founded the noted periodical Review of Reviews (1890)
- Became editor of the Northern Echo in 1871
- Became editor of the Pall Mall Gazette in 1883
- Known for his crusades for causes such as British-Russian friendship, ending child prostitution, the reform of England's criminal codes, and the maintenance of international peace



Source: Encyclopaedia Britannica

"Madam Krandievskaya! A single hair on your head is dearer to me than all the progressive and conservative newspapers," Stead cried out in despair and ran from the room. She never saw him again.

Seven years passed and in April 1912 Anastasia Romanovna, who was by then a little less brilliant, having lived through a great deal, opened the papers, as she did every day. On that day there were reports of the sinking of the Titanic. Her eyes ran down the list of passengers who had perished with the ship. Not that of course she would know any of them. But there, horror of horrors, was the name William Stead. Stead had set off to attend a peace conference in America, to discuss the means of stopping all the wars, for surely any reasonable person could see that war was an anachronism, that war would no longer happen, if only things were properly discussed.... She remembered his words "we met and parted like ships in the dark night and on the measureless ocean" and she wept. Why had she rebuffed this good man?

Tuberose

All he had wanted was peace, love and understanding. She sat down and wrote a short piece about their meeting for the newspaper. Her conscience troubled her.

World War One began two years later. In Russia it developed into a revolution. A February revolution, first of all, which overthrew the bloody Tsarist regime, as it was called, and then an October revolution, which brought in a new regime, far far bloodier. The coup of 1917 developed into a civil war which lasted several years. It meant, for our family, flight from Moscow, firstly to the south and then abroad. My father, two years old at the time, was taken into emigration on the last sailing out of Odessa. Anastasia Romanovna said goodbye to her little grandson and remained in Moscow. There was nothing to eat, no way of keeping warm. People slept in their clothes and burned whatever they could for fuel.

Strangers moved into the flat as part of the drive to "rationalise" living space. Anastasia Romanovna might have turned her home into a field hospital for revolutionaries, but when she was forced to accept their moving in she didn't much like it. At one point she only just managed in time to seize the paper with her article about Stead out of someone's hand: a revolutionary, who had rummaged through her archive and wanted to use the paper to light the stove. "In the dark night and on the measureless ocean," the once-beautiful woman thought, and wept again.

The Russian Revolution, 1917

- Food riots, demonstrations and a mutiny at the Petrograd Garrison in February 1917 forced Tsar Nicholas II to abdicate
- A Provisional Government led by liberals and moderate socialists was proclaimed
- But real power lay with the socialist leaders of the Petrograd (later All-Russian) Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies
- The "October" revolution placed the Bolsheviks in power, who promised "Peace, Bread and Land" to the Russian people

Those were her last tears for 10 years. Her townhouse was long gone and strangers themselves at home in the kitchen in her flat. She sold her hat and her dresses for kopecks and used the money to buy flour from the chef at the restaurant where once she had shone in that same hat. The philosophers and writers amongst whom she had shone had been sent to Siberia, and the lucky ones had been exiled abroad, and the only white flowers in her life were the ones she placed on her husband's grave.

The Russian poet Alexander Blok responded to the sinking of the Titanic with a strange and almost approving phrase. "The ocean is still alive," he wrote gloatingly in his notebook. For Blok contemporary civilization was false, stifling and permeated with lies, and he wished for its end, brought about by forces of nature. The ocean, dark and unpredictable, with its hideous depths, symbolized those elemental forces to him. The poet, along with many of his contemporaries, saw revolution as a purifying and liberating beginning, an ancient, wild and animal force, which would loose its bounds. The complacently "unsinkable" Titanic, full of well-fed passengers, strolling in the glow of electric light on soft carpets over the abyss - this was the image of "civilization".

The Magazine on the Titanic

Five Titanic myths spread by films

The final messages from a stricken ship

Why do ships still hit icebergs?

How can a disastrous ship be celebrated?

It was just as European civilization reached its apotheosis as it must have seemed, when progress, steam engines, telephones, electricity - goodness, even aeroplanes! - promised unprecedented growth and the final victory of man over nature, that everything crumbled, whole nations were

prey to mindless bestiality, the Great War began, chaos swallowed everything, and the world order collapsed; the world was never the same again.

A few people, the most sensitive felt this. The sinking of the Titanic was an emblem, a marker of the end of the world as it was known to them.

A small oversight... a strange coincidence... a tiny hole under the water's surface, barely more than a scratch... A shot in Sarajevo - hardly the first time a discontented nationalist has taken a potshot at a ruler... You might think it could have been averted - after all, the important thing is the belief in the rational and the desire to do good. William Stead, for example, who was not just going anywhere, he was going to America, to a conference dedicated to the complete and total cessation of war, all wars, everywhere. And Anastasia Romanovna helping the revolutionaries, who wanted happiness and goodness for all humanity.

The conservative wanted happiness for the conserved state, the revolutionary for the revolutionary state. But the ocean came, chaos broke loose and swallowed them all.

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The Dawn of the World, by C. Hart Merriam, [1910], at sacred-texts.com

THE BIRTH OF WEK'-WEK AND THE CREATION OF MAN

THE HOOL-POOM'-NE STORY OF CREATION

The Hool-poom'-ne lived on the east side of the lower Sacramento River, beginning a few miles below the place where the city of Sacramento now stands. They are now extinct.

PERSONAGES

O-let'-te Coyote-man, the Creator *Mol'-luk* the Condor, father of *Wek'-wek*

Wek'-wek the Falcon, son of *Mol'-luk* and grandson of *O-let'-te*

Hul'-luk mi-yum'-ko the two beautiful women chiefs of the Star-people

Os-so-so'-li Pleiades, one of the Star-women

Ke'-lok the North Giant

Hoo-soo'-pe the Mermaids or Water-maidens, sisters of *Wek'-wek*

Choo'-hoo the Turkey Buzzard

Kok'-kol the Raven

Ah-wet'-che the Crow

Koo-loo'-loo the Humming-bird

FRAGMENT OF VERSION TOLD BY THE HOO'-KOO-E-KO OF TOMALES BAY

PERSONAGES

O'-ye the Coyote-man

Wek'-wek the Falcon

Koo-loo'-pis the Humming-bird

THE BIRTH OF WEK'-WEK AND THE CREATION OF MAN

IN the beginning there was a huge bird of the vulture kind whose name was *Mol'-luk*, the California Condor. His home was on the mountain called *Oo'-yum-bel'-le* (Mount Diablo), whence he could look out over the world--westerly over San Francisco Bay and the great ocean; easterly over the tules and the broad flat Joaquin Valley.

Every morning *Mol'-luk* went off to hunt, and every evening he came back to roost on a large rock on the east side of the mountain. One morning he noticed that something was the matter with the rock, but did not know what the trouble was, or what to do for it. So he went off to consult the doctors. The doctors were brothers, two dark snipe-like little birds who lived on a small creek near the foot of the mountain. He told them his rock was sick and asked them to go with him, and led them to it. When they saw the rock they said, "The rock is your wife; she is going to give you a child;" and added, "we must make a big fire." Then all three set to work packing wood; they worked hard and brought a large quantity and made a big fire. Then they took hold of the rock,

tore it loose, rolled it into the fire, and piled more wood around it. When the rock became hot, it burst open with a great noise, and from the inside out darted *Wek'-wek* the Falcon. As he came out he said '*wek*' and passed on swiftly without stopping. He flew over all the country--north, south, east, and west--to see what it was like.

At that time there were no people. And there were no elderberry trees except a single one far away to the east in the place where the Sun gets up. There, in a den of rattlesnakes on a round topped hill grew *lah'-pah* the elderberry tree. Its branches, as they swayed in the wind, made a sweet musical sound. The tree sang; it sang all the time, day and night, and the song was good to hear. *Wek'-wek* looked and listened and wished he could have the tree. Near by he saw two *Hol-luk'-ki* or Star-people, and as he looked he perceived that they were the *Hul-luk mi-yum'-ko*--the great and beautiful women-chiefs of the Star-people. One was the Morning Star, the other Pleiades *Os-so-so'-li*. They were watching and working close by the elderberry tree. *Wek'-wek* liked the music and asked the Star-women about it. They told him that the tree whistled songs that kept them awake all day and all night so they could work all the time and never grow sleepy. They had the rattlesnakes to keep the birds from carrying off the elderberries.

Then *Wek'-wek* returned to his home on *Oo-yum-bel'-le* (Mount Diablo) and told *Mol'-luk* his

Click to enlarge
Mol'-luk the Condor looking off over the World from his Rock on Mount Diablo

father what he had seen. He said he had seen the beautiful Star-women and had heard the soft whistling song of the elderberry tree that keeps one from feeling sleepy. He asked his father how they could get the music tree and have it at their home on *Oo'-yum-bel'-le*.

Mol'-luk the Condor looking off over the World from his Rock on Mount Diablo

Mol'-luk answered, "My son, I do not know; I am not very wise; you will have to ask your grandfather; he knows everything."

"Where is my grandfather?" asked *Wek'-wek*.

"He is by the ocean," *Mol'-luk* replied.

"I never saw him," said *Wek'-wek*.

His father asked, "Didn't you see something like a stump bobbing in the water and making a noise as it went up and down?"

"Yes," said *Wek'-wek*, "I saw that."

"Well," replied *Mol'-luk*, "that is your grandfather."

"How can I get him?" asked *Wek'-wek*.

"You can't get all of him, but perhaps you can break off a little piece and in that way get him."

So *Wek'-wek* flew off to the ocean, found the stump bobbing in the water, and tore off a little piece and brought it home. When he awoke next morning the little piece had changed into *O-let'-te*, the Coyote-man, who was already living in a little house of his own on top of the mountain. *O-let'-te* told *Wek'-wek* that he was his grandfather.

Wek'-wek told *Mol'-luk* his father and added, "Now I've got my grandfather."

Mol'-luk replied, "Ask him what you want to know; he knows everything."

So *Wek'-wek* asked *O-let'-te*, "How are we going to get the elderberry music?"

"Ho-ho," answered *O-let'-te*, "that is very difficult; you might have bad luck and might be killed."

But *Wek'-wek* continued, "I want it."

Then the wise *O-let'-te* said: "All right, go and buy it, but mind what I tell you or you will be killed. You will find the Star-women pleasant and pretty. They will want you to stay and play with them. If you do so, you will die. Go and do as I tell you."

So *Wek'-wek* went. He flew fast and far--far away to the east, to the place where the Sun gets up. There he found *Hul-luk mi-yum'-ko* the Star-women and *lah'-pah* the elderberry tree. The Star-women were people of importance; both were chiefs. *Wek'-wek* had taken with him long strings of *haw'-wut*, the shell money, which as he flew streamed out behind. This he gave them for the elderberry music. The Star-women liked the *haw'-wut* and accepted it and led *Wek'wek* to the elderberry tree and told him to break off a little piece and take it home and he would have all. But when he reached the tree the rattlesnakes stood up all around and hissed at him to frighten him, for he was a stranger. The Star-women told him not to be afraid, they would drive the snakes away. So they scolded the snakes and sent them down into

their holes. Then *Wek'-wek* took his *soo'-pe* [digging stick] and pried off a piece of the tree. The Star-women began to play with him and wanted him to stay with them, but remembering what *O-let'-te* his grandfather had told him, he paid no attention to them but took the piece of elderberry tree and carried it swiftly home to *Oo-yum-bel'le*.

When he arrived he said to *O-let'-te*, "Grandfather, I've brought the music-tree; what shall we do with it so we can have the music?"

O-let'-te laughed as he replied, "Do you really think you have it?"

"Yes," answered *Wek'-wek*, "here it is."

Then *O-let'-te* said, "We must put it in the ground over all the country to furnish music for the *Mew'-ko* [Indian people] we are going to make, for pretty soon we shall begin to make the people."

Wek'-wek answered "Yes," but thought he would wait and see who was the smarter, himself or *O-let'-te*-for he felt very proud because he had brought the music tree.

Then they went out and traveled over' all the country and planted the elderberry tree so that by and by it would furnish music and food and medicine for the Indian people they were going to make. *O-let'-te* told *Wek'-wek* that the berries would make food, the roots and blossoms medicine, and the hollow branches music.

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The boat that landed on a roof and saved 59 people

23December2014

bbc.com

The boat on the house has become a tourist attraction

When the tsunami swept through Banda Aceh in Indonesia 10 years ago, the Basyariah family became trapped on the top floor of a house - the water was up to their necks and rising fast. But they had an amazing escape when a boat landed on the roof.

Among the red roofs of the newly-built houses in Lampulo village there is an extraordinary sight: a huge fishing boat perched on top of two houses.

The 25m-long wooden vessel has become a popular attraction on the tsunami tourism trail. Signs point to *Kapal di atas rumah*, which means the boat above the house - and a plaque details how the impromptu ark saved 59 people's lives.

One of them is local businesswoman Fauziah Basyariah. "If it had not been for that boat we would all have drowned because none of us could swim," she says.

Basyariah is still brought to tears when she remembers that terrifying day. "Not long after the earthquake, people started screaming that the seawater was coming. We were confused but then we saw the water gushing in," she says.

Nobody understood what was happening - the tsunami was unlike anything they had ever experienced before. "I thought it was Judgment Day," says Basyariah.

Her husband had taken the motorbike to go shopping, so she grabbed her five children and started running. They couldn't outrun the water which was rising fast, so she started to look for shelter higher up.

The earthquake had destroyed a lot of buildings on their street, but they found a house that was still standing and the six of them ran inside and up to the second floor - but they soon realised it was not high enough. "It was less than a minute before the water reached us," says Basyariah. "The first wave was very black - we didn't know if it was oil or water."

Soon a second, even larger, wave came. By then the family were trapped. "We were floating with our heads touching the ceiling - the water was up around our necks. I thought we would drown," Basyariah says.

Then, through the window, they saw a strange sight - a large fishing boat bearing down on them. "People were screaming," she says. "But then it got wedged on top of the house and stopped."

Her 14-year-old son managed to make a small hole in the ceiling and climbed out on to roof. He pulled the family out, one by one, and they all clambered on board the boat. Others joined them.

"When I got on to the boat, I just prayed and prayed," says Basyariah. "We thanked God that the boat had saved us, but even the boat wasn't that stable because it was full of water, so we were just clinging on."

They watched helplessly as all around them buildings collapsed, with people still inside. "There was

The boat in 2005 surrounded by devastation

nothing we could do," says Basyariah, wiping away a tear. "Although it's 10 years since the tsunami, when I talk about it, I feel as though it just happened yesterday. I feel so sad - I'll never forget it."

When the waters receded, Basyariah and her children went to live in a village further inland called Beurawe, but they kept returning to Lampulo to look for loved ones who were missing. "I didn't know where my husband was. And my parents too - they had run, but they were old, and I knew they would find it hard to escape." She never found them.

The widowed Basyariah suddenly found herself having to support five children on her own. While staying in a temporary shelter, aid agencies taught her new skills - how to cultivate fish, how to sew and how to make cakes. That's how she came up with the idea of selling dried tuna snacks.

A year after the tsunami, Basyariah launched a fish business with a loan of 500,000 rupiah ($40) - she has now moved back to Lampulo where she supports her family and employs a handful of women in the village.

Fauziah and her Tsunami dried fish product

Fauziah Basyariah's popular snacks are even taken to Mecca as gifts
The business provides jobs for other local women

Outside her house, a few doors down from the boat, women package up the dried fish which has been fried in garlic and onion. The snacks are called "Tsunami dried tuna" and have a picture of the boat on the label. "We were saved in the boat. We would like to remember this," she says.

There were reportedly about 15 fishing boats stranded on the roofs of Lampulo after the tsunami, but the others have now been moved. Zulfikar, the owner of this boat, agreed to leave it as a memorial, despite the fact he had recently repaired it and had hoped to go out fishing on the day of the tsunami.

Today, the boat is revered as a sort of Noah's ark, but it is also a daily reminder of what happened. "Everyone is trying to take advantage of the fact that the boat is here," says Basyariah. "Everyone has a different story about how the boat saved them. People even make stories up."

As well as attracting tourists, Banda Aceh's memorials have an educational role. Prior to 2004, few knew what a tsunami was, so when the seawater withdrew before the wave came, people ran to collect the fish left on the sand instead of running to higher ground.

Now school children are taken to visit tsunami memorials and taught what to look out for.

The tsunami killed a disproportionately high number of women and children because they were unable to

swim. About 45,000 more women than men died - in some communities entire generations of children and old people were wiped out.

Awareness of the warning signs saved many lives on Simeulue, an island off the west coast of Aceh - just seven people died there in the tsunami compared to 167,000 on Aceh itself.

The hilly geography of the island helped, but the islanders also knew what to do thanks to a local storytelling tradition called *smong*. According to a Unesco report, smong stories told to children often ended with a warning: "If a strong tremor occurs, and if the sea withdraws soon after, run to the hills, for the sea will soon rush ashore."

Additional reporting by Vibeke Venema

Candida Beveridge's report from Banda Aceh is featured on Outlook on the BBC World Service at 12.05 GMT on 24 Dec 2014. Listen to Fauziah Basyariah's interview *or* hear more stories from Banda Aceh.

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The Case of the Sausage Vat Murder and the Dissolved Wife

By strangeremains*on*August 31, 2014 • (1)

"Unable to dissolve his marriage, he decided to dissolve his wife."

-Clyde Snow, *The Stories Bones Tell*

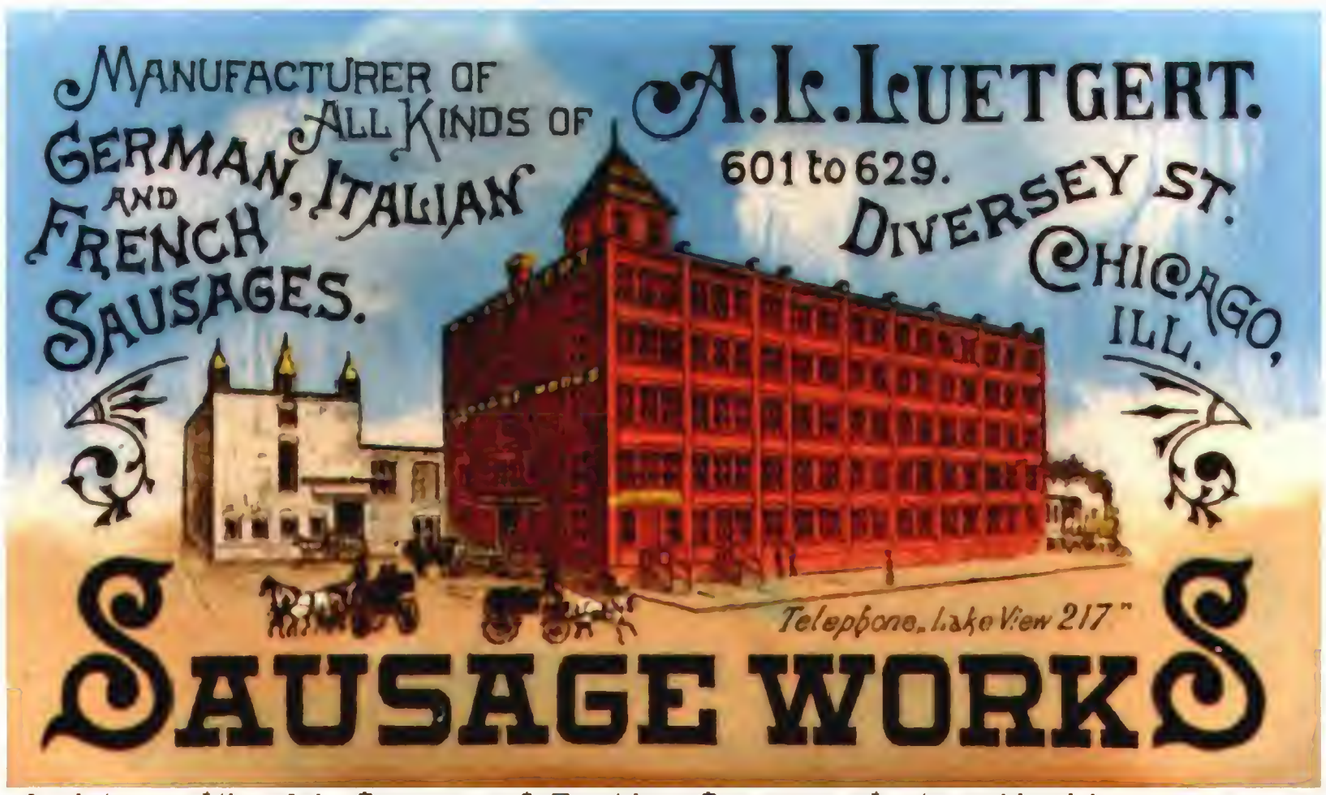
Adolph and Louise Luetgert. Image Credit: Alchemy of Bones

Adolph and Louise Luetgert. Image Credit: Alchemy of Bones

On Diversey and Hermitage Avenue in Chicago's Lakeview neighborhood is an industrial building that was converted to condominiums in the 1990's. Though this building is nondescript today, it was the site of a grisly murder at the end of the 19th century.

Adolph Luetgert (December 27, 1845 – July 7, 1899) was a tanner and butcher who moved from Germany in the early 1870's. Shortly after his first wife died, Luetgert married Louise Bicknese in 1878, a woman who was ten years his junior. On their wedding day, he gave Louise a gold ring that was inscribed with her new initials, L.L.

Luetgert opened a small sausage company in 1879 that became successful. In 1897 he opened the A.L. Sausage & Packing Company in a five-story plant on the southwest corner of Diversey and Hermitage. Next door to the sausage works, Luetgert built a three-story family home for Louise and their two sons, Elmer and Louis.



A picture of the A.L. Sausage & Packing Company featured inside a company

A picture of the A.L. Sausage & Packing Company featured inside a company paperweight. Image Credit: Alchemy of Bones

Unfortunately Adolph and Louise's marriage was not a happy one and the world was about to find out what kind of monster lay inside Adolph Luetgert.

Adolph and Louise went on a

paperweight. Image Credit: Alchemy of Bones

walk the evening of May 1, 1897-this was the last time anyone saw Louise alive. On May 7th Adolph reported his wife missing but her family suspected foul play. Police questioned relatives and friends and searched the city for Louise Luetgert or her remains.

During a search of Luetgert's factory on May 15th, a watchman suggested they look in a steam vat in the cellar that was used to dip sausages. The police looked inside and found that the vat was filled halfway with a putrid smelling reddish-brown liquid. When the police pulled a plug near the bottom of the vat, on the outside, the slimy liquid and small pieces of bone fell out. Inside the cauldron police found a gold ring that had L.L. engraved on the inside. Near the vat investigators discovered a strand of hair, pieces of clothing, and half of a false tooth.

After police questioned some employees, investigators learned Luetgert had workers dump ashes from the smokehouse. When they examined the areas the factory workers indicated investigators found more bone and pieces of burned corset steel.

Luetgert was arrested shortly after these discoveries and was tried for Louise's murder. The trial became a media sensation that drew reporters from thousands of miles away.

During the trial, friends and relatives of the Luetgert family testified that Adolph physically abused and cheated on Louise. A smokehouse helper also testified that Luetgert ordered 378 pounds of potash on March 11th, and ordered employees to dump the chemical in the steam vat with water on April 24th. The same worker also stated that on Saturday May 1st, the day Louise disappeared, Luetgert turned on the steam line to the cauldron and boiled the mixture. The following Sunday and Monday factory workers unwittingly helped Luetgert clean up the rancid liquid that boiled over from the vat, which was either buried around the factory or burned in the smokehouse.

Adolph's defense was that his wife went insane and ran away, the potash was used to make soap to clean the factory, and the bones found in the factory were animal. Without a body it would be difficult to confirm that Louise was dead. So the prosecution had to prove that the potash mixture could have been used to dispose of Louise's body and the remains found in the vat could belong to her.

The prosecution determined that the potash mixture could dissolve a human body with a demonstration. With a real human cadaver and a cauldron filled with the potash formula Luetgert allegedly used, the prosecution was able to liquify the cadaver and got the same reddish-brown fluid. The potash would have leached the calcium from Louise's bones and liquefied the rest of her body.

George Dorsey, anthropologist and curator of the Field Museum, and some of his colleagues analyzed bone fragments recovered from the A.L. Sausage & Packing Company. Dorsey testified that the pebble-sized pieces of bone belonged to a human female.

The Luetgert murder trial was one of the first cases in which an anthropologist was called to testify as an expert witness. Today forensic anthropologists doubt that Dorsey could have

determined whether or not the tiny pieces of bone were human, much less that they belonged to a female. Though the jury and the reporters at the trial thought Dorsey's testimony was convincing, it was the circumstantial evidence that swayed the jury.

The Luetgert marital discord and the presence of Louise's wedding ring in the vat were damning. And Luetgert's defense of using 378 pounds of potash to make soap to clean the factory was ridiculous because his mixture would have made about 2000lbs of soap. This amount would have been enough to clean the factory a few times over and was more expensive than buying the soap over the counter.

Luetgert was eventually found guilty and was sent to Joliet State Penitentiary. He died on July 7, 1899, but maintained his innocence throughout his short incarceration.

There were a few urban legends that spread after the trial. The most gruesome was that Luetgert ground Louise's body into sausage and sold it to his customers. But the plant was not manufacturing sausage at the time of the murder so the presence of her body in the factory had nothing to do with sausage-making or accidental cannibalism. Despite this, the rumor was enough to cause sausage sales to plummet during the investigation and murder trial.

Eventually the neighborhood kids recited a rhyme about the gory tale:

Old man Luetgert made sausage out of his wife!

He turned on the steam,

His wife began to scream,

There`ll be a hot time in the old town tonight!

There were also stories that the ghost of Louise Luetgert haunted the sausage factory. Four years after the murder trial, a watchman at the shuttered factory believed he saw Louise's apparition and reported his paranormal experience to police. Inexplicably, the police captain sent two detectives to investigate this phenomenon. According to newspaper reports, these two cops were so startled when they witnessed mysterious lights and Louise's ghost near the vat where her body was liquefied that they drew their weapons.

But Louise's ghost seems to have found peace in the decades since because there doesn't seem to be any experiences since the factory was converted to condominiums.

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"Spontaneous human combustion is for superstitious atheists. I believe in deliberate human combustion."
– Bauvard

The one instance where you wish there was less spontaneity.

Contrary to popular opinion, human beings aren't all that flammable. Human bodies require prolonged exposure to temperatures in excess of 1400 degrees Fahrenheit to combust, and even then, we only give off a modest 1000 Btu's per pound of flesh. By way of comparison, wood gives off roughly 6000 Btu's per pound. In short, we're a poor excuse for a fuel source. Wood also doesn't smell as bad when you stack it up in piles behind the garage. Or get you charged with war crimes, for that matter. Yet, occasionally we do seem to spontaneously combust, or at least burn with uncharacteristic efficiency, with some 200 reported cases over the past 300 years, but generally there is a tenuous insinuation that either exceptionally poor personal habits (smoking, alcoholism, obesity), abject stupidity (setting oneself on fire) e.g. "A French chemist, it is said, after drinking a pint of ether during the day, used to amuse himself at evening, by lighting up his breath, directed in a very small stream upon the flame of a lamp" (Mussey, 1829, p8) , or foul play are the catalyst. The simple fact is, every once in a while we run across the odd *Homo sapiens* that has completely or partially combusted with (1) only questionable or inadequate sources of ignition in the vicinity, (2) little or no damage to other more combustible things nearby, and (3) a disturbing tendency to leave behind intact, unburnt portions of anatomy, even though the rest of the body has been burned to ashes which can be particularly disconcerting depending on the appendage that survives (although usually its hands, feet, or legs, so fingers crossed in case it ever happens to me). Since, as a species, we're so hard to kindle, when an unfortunate soul spontaneously combusts, somebody is often suspected of plotting an especially devious murder.

Spontaneous human combustion as a serious explanation for a small number of deaths seems to have piqued the curiosity of physicians, forensic investigators, attorneys, and most importantly, insurance underwriters in the early 19th Century. This of course, coincided with the rise of the Temperance Movement (at least in the United States), so much of the early medical literature places the blame directly on alcoholism, as in a report from the American Temperance Society, which stated, "The bodies of some few drinkers have been so thoroughly steeped in spirit, as literally to take fire and consume to ashes. It is said that no case of this spontaneous combustion has ever occurred, except among hard drinkers, and it is altogether probable that in every such case, an inflammable air has exhaled from the lungs or skin, or both, and has been kindled by the too near approach of a lighted taper, or some ignited substance" (American Temperance Society, 1829, p45). Skeptics were quick to point out that not every case of human combustion was alcohol related, and that the evidence was inconclusive. "The similarity in the appearance of the flame in spontaneous human combustion to that of alcohol when ignited, contributes nothing more conclusive in support of this hypothesis; since the combustion of other bodies, such as carhureted and sulphureted hydrogen gas present also the same resemblance in the appearance of the flame. To these objections to the validity of the explication which has been noticed, it may be added with still greater force, that persons have in some instances, as in the case recently occurring in this city, been the subject of spontaneous combustion, whose character was exempt from the slightest imputation in respect to the abusive use of strong drinks of any description" (Overton, 1835, p151). I don't know about you, but it's starting to sound like there were a whole lot more people spontaneously combusting in the early 1900's than we previously suspected. Undoubtedly, it took no

time at all, once medical professionals began soberly discussing the merits of spontaneous combustion as an explanation for otherwise inexplicable and fiery deaths, for lawyers to seize on the notion as an awesomely headline-grabbing defense in murder trials. One such disturbing case was that of the apparent spontaneous combustion of Countess Georlitz of the Grand Duchy of Hesse (the independent country where Hessians hailed from, incorporated into the German Empire in 1871) in 1847.

As recent as March, 1850, in a Court of Assizes in Darmstadt during the trial of John Stauff, accused of the murder of the Countess Goerlitz, the counsel for the defense advanced the theory of spontaneous human combustion, and such eminent doctors as von Siebold, Graff, von Liebig, and other prominent members of the Hessian medical fraternity were called to comment on its possibility; principally on their testimony a conviction and life-imprisonment was secured (Gould, 1956, p428).

Keeping in mind that the average full blown house fire burns at around 1200 degrees Fahrenheit, unless you're an avid collector of napalm or white phosphorous, and the fact that most cases of spontaneous human combustion involve the complete, but localized incineration of a human body (a pile of ash remains, and the odd pristine, uncooked appendage), along with very little evidence of the surrounding environment having been subjected to such extreme temperatures, it strains credulity to assume that a perfectly natural explanation such as excessive imbibement of spirits, or an excess of fat is the culprit, and the imprecation of foul play similarly requires a belief in Scooby-Doo levels of nefarious complexity on the part of an evildoer. The death of Countess Goerliz was complicated by (1) the puzzling nature of her apparent combustion, (2) the unhappy relations with her husband, and the fact that he stood to gain quite a bit of money once she shuffled off this mortal coil, and (3) the post-conviction confession of a servant named John Stauff, who was charged with her murder – an account which in no way accorded with the state of the corpse or the room it was found in. Stauff's defense went with the apparent occurrence of spontaneous human combustion, ultimately rejected as an explanation, when learned physicians assured the court as to the impossibility of such a thing. Learned physicians think they're so smart. And what they no doubt meant to say in class-conscious 19th Century Europe is that while the unwashed masses of the liquor guzzling proletariat, ne'er-do-wells, and impoverished loners might suddenly find themselves alight, such things certainly did not happen to Countesses.

But the most celebrated case is that of the Countess Goerlitz, whose body was found partly consumed in the midst of articles of furniture still burning. Her servant John Stauff, was arrested for the murder, and tried at Damstadt in 1850. The defense of spontaneous combustion was set up. Liepig and Bischoff testified that spontaneous combustion of the human body was impossible. The subject was immediately taken up all over the world. Dr. Devergie, a professor of the Prussian School of medicine and medical inspector at the Morgue, was one of their most powerful opponents, and narrated an instance of alleged spontaneous combustion that he had personally investigated. But, unfortunately for the theory of spontaneous combustion, Stauff was convicted, and confessed the crime (Fellows, 1880, p27).

The gory and sensational details surrounding the life and flaming death of Countess Goerlitz have all the makings of either a good murder mystery or anomalous conflagration of nobility. Here's the fact ma'am. Countess Goerlitz was married to, obviously, Count Goerlitz, Chamberlin and Privy Councilor to the Grand Duke of Hesse. The Count by and Countess married in 1820 and moved into a mansion in Darmstadt with four servants (one of which was John Stauff). The Count had his spiffy title, but pretty much nothing else besides his good reputation to his name. The Countess came from a wealthy merchant family that had been enobled by the Grand Duke, and had received a sizable inheritance, taking perverse pleasure in commenting on the "beggar" aristocracy that invariably needed to find a wealthy trader's daughter for a wife to maintain their financial liquidity. The marriage was not an especially happy one. They essentially lived in two separate apartments within the house, went childless, and only occasionally dined together. This may not have been such an abnormal state of affairs in early 19th Century Hesse, but the two were reputed to be on rather unfriendly terms. In the grand scheme of the injustice of the universe, it's important to note that the relative fortune of the

Countess would accrue to the Count upon her death.

At 6:30 PM on June 13, 1847, the Count returned from his customary Sunday dinner at the Grand Duke's palace with a pocketful of macaroons to assuage his wife's sweet tooth (and perhaps he was looking for a little action). John Stauff (serving as the Lady's Chamberlin) informed him the Countess was in, but the Count got no response to his knocks on her locked door. Assuming she was taking a nap, he settled in for a quiet evening, sending Stauff at 9 PM to inquire if she would like to join him for a light supper. Stauff informed him that the Countess now appeared to have left the mansion. After a cursory search of the house and inquiries of nearby neighbors, the whereabouts of the Countess had not been ascertained. Having no key to the Countess' locked rooms, the Count summoned a locksmith. A young locksmith who arrived noted that he smelled smoke, and after another hour and a half of attempting to identify the source, opted to break into the rooms of the Countess with a hammer. The rooms were filled with thick smoke, and at first glance, her writing desk was on fire. Once the fire was extinguished and the smoke cleared, the Countess was discovered on the floor nearby.

The upper portion was burnt to coal; one hand was charred; on the left foot was a shoe, the other was found, later, in another room. More water was brought, and the fire in the parlour was completely quenched. Then only was it possible to examine the place. The fire had, apparently, originated at the writing-desk or secretaire of the Countess; the body had lain before the table, and near it was a chair, thrown over. From the drawing-room a door, which was found open, led into the boudoir. This boudoir had a window that looked into a side street In the ante-room were no traces of fire. In the drawing-room only the secretaire and the floor beneath it had been burnt. On a chiffonier against the wall were candlesticks, the stearine candles in them had been melted by the heat of the room and run over the chiffonier. In this room was also a sofa, opposite the door leading from the ante-chamber, some way from the desk and the seat of the fire. In the middle of the sofa was a hole fourteen inches long by six inches broad, burnt through the cretonne cover, the canvas below, and into the horse hair beneath. A looking-glass hung against the wall above; this glass was broken and covered with a deposit as of smoke. It was apparent, therefore, that a flame had leaped up on the sofa sufficiently high and hot to snap the mirror and obscure it. Left of the entrance-door was a bell-rope, torn down and cast on the ground.

Beyond the parlour was the boudoir. It had a little corner divan. Its cover was burnt through in two places. The cushion at the back was also marked with holes burnt through. Above this seat against the wall hung an oil painting. It was blistered with heat. Near it was an etagere, on which were candles; these also were found melted completely away. In this boudoir was found the slipper from the right foot of the Countess. If the reader will consider what we have described, he will see that something very mysterious must have occurred. There were traces of burning in three distinct places—on the sofa, and at the secretaire in the parlour, and on the corner seat in the boudoir. It was clear also that the Countess had been in both rooms, for her one slipper was in the boudoir, the other on her foot in the drawing-room. Apparently, also, she had rung for assistance, and torn down the bell-rope.
Another very significant and mysterious feature of the case was the fact that the two doors were found locked, and that the key was not found with the body, nor anywhere in the rooms. Consequently, the Countess had not locked herself in. Again:—the appearance of the corpse was peculiar. The head and face were burnt to cinder, especially the face, less so the back of the head. All the upper part of the body had been subjected to fire, as far as the lower ribs, and there the traces of burning ceased absolutely. Also, the floor was burnt in proximity to the corpse, but not where it lay. The body had protected the floor where it lay from fire (Baring-Gould, 1889, p205-207).

Given the bizarre circumstances of her death, and the profit motive, suspicion immediately fell on Count Goerlitz, as the evidence made it highly unlikely that the Countess had set herself on fire, either accidentally or purposefully. Count Goerlitz was an important figure in the Duchy, so they wanted things hushed up pretty quickly. The local press liked such a titillating story too much to let it go. Goerlitz

himself, tired of being suspected, asked that the case be reopened on October 6, 1847. Three years later, the courts concluded that Goerlitz had a pretty good set of alibis and dismissed the case. Still, in 1848 the body of the Countess was exhumed and forensic examiners determined that her skull had been fractured and she had been strangled. One has to wonder, given that forensic science wasn't especially advanced in the 1800's, about the reliability of digging up a two year old, largely burned corpse and determining cause of death, but the point was that even though Count Goerlitz had been cleared, foul play of some sort was still suspected, with a fire subsequently set to hide evidence. On November 3rd, 1847, Countess Goerlitz servant John Stauff was arrested for attempting to poison the Count (a well known contemporary case in France had the Duke of Praslin murdering his wife, and then committing suicide by poison), and finally on August 28, 1848, Stauff was charged with the murder of Countess Goerlitz. The timeline for the crimes was a bit dubious as the only times Stauff was alone in the house with the Countess were between 3:30 – 4 PM and 4:30 – 5 PM. Most of the evidence was circumstantial, but he was convicted anyway.

It has been supposed that in certain cases the dead human body has been destroyed more than appeared consistent with the fact of ordinary combustion from articles of dress or furniture; but this opinion has arisen from a want of sufficient experience on the effects of heat. Then, as the means by which the dress of a person had become ignited were generally destroyed with the body, it was thought that a human being might, under certain conditions, be consumed by fire spontaneously generated within him. This extravagant hypothesis has, however, found advocates in modern times. In March, 1850, a man named Stauff was tried at Damstadt for the murder of the Countess of Goerlitz. He had assaulted the deceased in her chamber, and then set fire to the furniture with a view to conceal his crime. The body and dress were partially consumed. As the means by which the fire was applied were not at once apparent, and the assassin had locked the doors of the room, some medical men took up the theory that the deceased had died from spontaneous combustion. The facts of the case were referred to Liebig and Bischoff, and their report was issued in March, 1850, at which date the man Stauff was put on his trial. They found no difficulty in concluding that a murder had been perpetrated, and the body willfully burnt after death for the purpose of concealing the crime. There was some doubt whether the deceased had died from strangulation, or from violence to the head. Stauff was convicted, chiefly on circumstantial evidence. He subsequently confessed that the countess had entered her room as he was in the act of committing a robbery. A struggle took place; he seized her by the throat, strangled her, and afterwards placed the body in a chair, piling around it combustible articles of furniture. He set fire to these, with a view of destroying the proofs of his crime. It was observed that the tongue of the deceased was protruded, as it is in violent strangulation, and that in its charred state it retained the position given to it by the act of murder. Other instances of alleged spontaneous combustion, if properly investigated, would have turned out to be cases of accidental or homicidal burning (Taylor, 1897, p395).

Interestingly, Stauff only "confessed" long after his conviction, when he applied for a pardon from the Grand Duke, and the only grounds upon on which he could appeal after 25 some years in prison were that his crime was "unpremeditated". Basically, he seems to have cut a deal as many of the details of his confession did not adequately explain the evidence. He was pardoned by the Duke on the condition that he would immediately leave the country and live out the rest of his life in exile in America. Was the Countess Goerlitz a victim of murder or was this a case of spontaneously combusting nobility? We will probably never know for sure. Except for those learned Hessian physicians. They are sure that spontaneous human combustion does not exist. At least when it comes to countesses.

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Haunted Horror: The Corpsewood Murders - Who Forted? Magazine

By Ken Summers on February 10, 2014

whofortedblog.com

corpsewoodmurders

Being openly gay in certain parts of the United States has always been dangerous. And for two men living in rural Georgia, this was proven true one night in 1982. Today, nature has reclaimed scene of a horrific crime, swallowing up the traces of human habitation on Taylor Ridge. But the exact events surrounding the deaths of Charles Scudder and Joseph Odom still are topics of debate and angry words around Summerville, Georgia.

Out of all the stories I've blogged and written about over the past decade, Corpsewood Manor has been the most controversial. Some people still believe the convicted murderers should have been found innocent. Tales of satanic worship, rape, and drugging with LSD have muddied the crime and made the victims seem less like your average gay couple and more like evil inhuman beings. Today, the site is considered extremely haunted and many strange tales have been told by those brave enough to wander deep into the woods, risking harm from the living far more than from the dead.

A boulder blocks Dead Horse Road, named for the equine corpse found there by Odom and Scudder.

The Corpsewood murders were the subject of a chapter in my last book; in fact, it was the first chapter I ever wrote. The night I finished writing it, I'm not ashamed to admit that I slept with the lights on. The combination of a gruesome murder scene and a creepy, isolated, haunted building ruin chilled me to the core. I don't know how much of it was my imagination having spent weeks immersed in the details of the incident, but I never felt alone while writing the chapter. Needless to say, I didn't sleep well that night.

To better understand the whole story of Corpsewood, it's important to know not only what happened that fateful night but who Charles Scudder and Joseph Odom were.

A photograph showing Charles Scudder, Joey Odom, and Beelzebub in happier times.

Charles Scudder was a professor of pharmacology at Loyola University in Chicago, a widowed father to four boys. He lived with his two dogs and a "quiet feminine" man named Joseph Odom. A fifth-grade dropout having spent several years on the wrong side of the law, Odom served as a housekeeper and "companion" for Scudder. By all accounts, Odom was more than just an employee of Scudder. The two men shared a bed.

general, then gets to the specifics. "Certain areas of the United States" is general (ex. Matthew Shepard, Rhea County's attempt to 'ban gays'). As for the "topics of debate and angry words" part, I've heard many people telling me what "really" happened there over the years, and there are people who have told me that the murderers were wrongly convicted/deserved light sentences.

Not everything I wrote is the opinions of citizens. Defense attorneys arguing a case make bold statements too. But if 100% of the local population liked them, they wouldn't have been robbed and murdered by locals.

Everything I wrote is based on something someone said about the case somewhere in print. I'm not going to waste energy on all the sentences you're trying to break apart like some college dissertation. Many sentences, especially at the end, were "conjecture", or in terms of logic, *logical fallacies*. Of course we don't know exactly what Scudder was thinking. I posed a number of questions–even illogical ones–to elicit thought and response, which is why it ends the way it does: to provoke discussion.

In this world, people have many different versions of what the truth of anything actually is. Just in history books alone, truth is subject to who is writing it. As they say,'history is written by the victors." What I wrote is a very short article brushing the surface of a very elaborate story, not a *Dateline Special* or 1000-page book. Even the one book on the subject, a compilation of period newspaper articles, does not tell all. But to imply that just because you've never personally heard something means it's false is in itself a fallacy.

■ mitch walker

04/25/2014 at 5:42 PM

To trion resident, you seem to have really jumped up on your soap box on this one, I NEVER once said that I felt the bible was wrong, I simply stated that IF a person didn't choose to believe in the Bible then your side of the argument don't hold water, you base everything you say on the Bible, and that is fine, BUT your personal belief in the good book DON'T make it factual for everyone reading this, THAT is where you go wrong, you went on and on about how only God could decide what was wrong or right in your first bashing of Mr. Summers but you turn right around and judge him and me over and over and you have no idea who I am or what I stand for, only your twisted take on what I have written. if you want to debate this with me I urge you to do a google search for my name, I write as well topofthebox is my blog and I would be happy to debate this IF you can do so on a FACTUAL basis, I do want to thank you for your prayers for me each of us need all the help we can get, some more than others, like those who sit on the pedestal judging others, I myself don't hide behind a screen name I used my name and I live in Dalton look me up.

■ Trion Resident

04/27/2014 at 9:18 AM

To Mr. Summers, I stated my position at the first and I have tried to from that point after doing so take a kinder and gentler position since you knew where I stood and there was no need to further re-state that claim. I feel you have not backed away from or took a kinder approach but that is your call.

I have read countless books Mr. Summers and those of which have little to NO bias are among the best in history. It is true that many wish to change parts of history who write the textbooks, as has been the case in the past throughout time.

But bias is bias, and trying to change history JUST because others do it isn't a basis for writing history correctly. I myself have never encountered someone who spoke of these men as you state some have, besides the lawyers, and I've lived here all of my

life, besides a two year time frame in which I lived right across the State line.

It is obvious I suppose that you could (as I assume you must have) find people to bad mouth them as you could find ANYONE to bad mouth you or I if we looked hard enough. That wasn't the point I was had a problem with, but it was a stereotypical view somehow here that many hated the men because of their homosexuality and occulttic practices.

I gave you line by line of your own words of bias, but you are unwilling to answer for your own words. Furthermore, in my sincere pursuit of further debate, I even complimented you on being spot on with much of the story, after we had each thrown our gauntlets down so to speak about where we stand on morality and God.

I had no problem with any brevity you might have taken in preparing a report of Corpsewood, but only a deliberate choosing of certain things to somehow prove your point of A) the men's innocence B) that people here are basically bigots and homophobes and C) homosexuality and the occult are not bad, but in FACT, those who view them as bad are bad.

I myself believe whole-heartedly that Avery and Brock are killers and what they did was without a doubt wrong. I'm not sure if Scudder did in fact provoke it, but that didn't give them the right to do wrong to Scudder, much less Odom.

And lastly Mr. Summers, as I stated above, just because many others have attempted to re-write history from "their' perspective, your job as a writer and this case a quasi-historian, is to report the absolute truth about the subject matter and settle for NOTHING less.

Bias however gets in the way of doing so. Therefore, because of my moral convictions and the bias of your piece, I responded. But as I've stated herein, I've tried to be congenial from that point and hope we could maybe return to the subject matter after having our points of disagreement firmly and wholly deliberated.

I have always found this place to be beyond unique, but then again, I'm interested in anything that entails something regarding ghosts. In changing gears, I myself can usually know when a place is haunted. I've had such experiences at Cave Spring for the School for the Blind, etc. knowing it was haunted before ever reading about it, or on vacation in Montgomery, AL, my wife and I went on a tour of old buildings and I lingered for some time in an old School house. I lingered by the desk and by the chalkboard on the right side of the room. I knew something was off there. Several years later, I read about the ghost that inhabits that old school. This has happened to me on several occasions, and also happened to me at the "Castle."

I went up there with a group, but got away from them knowing that if I heard or felt anything, it would be by myself. I walked around the pond area and back into the woods a little away from the group. As I was meandering through the woods, I heard a cat meow as if it were right on my shoulder. I turned around, looked for the cat and saw nothing. (It was winter time so I could see fairly well through the woods).

I kept walking and this happened two more times as if someone were putting a speaker to my right ear and playing a cat meowing. I've also done recordings there, video and audio and took numerous pictures. I of course got several orbs in many of the pictures.

So I've punted the ball to you Mr. Summers. Have a great day.

■ Trion Resident

04/27/2014 at 9:18 AM

To Mitch Walker, I'm not really sure what you are talking about in jumping up on my soap box. If anyone "jumped" quickly, I'm afraid it was you Mr. Walker. Your first lines of response to me were: "with

all due respect you are one of the ones who give Christians a bad name. Your talking out of both sides of your mouth"

And your statements after your introduction:

"if you don't like the story then curl back up in your self righteous ways an don't read it. Your fire an brimstone views will convert no one here nor any where else for that manner do you really believe that your faith give you the inside scoop on what is right an what is wrong? To you the Bible may be the final truth but that don't make it so for those who don't choose to follow the word of God"

By your own acknowledgement, you claim Christianity Mr. Walker, but by your own words, you deny Him. YES, I DO have the inside "scoop" on what is right and what is wrong. It is called the BIBLE. And YES, God IS the final word on Truth. If you DON'T hold those convictions to be true, in SPITE of or regardless of how others believe, then I am truly afraid you have lost what faith you possibly had.

Christians don't abort their faith in tolerance of others. We are called to love all, but not to accept all. Elders in the church are also called to, what you would call, JUDGE others. Please read 1 Corinthians chapter 6, or even Matthew chapter 7 where Jesus states not to judge, but then in the SAME chapter tells us, "we will know them by their fruit." Observing sin to be SIN, and judging someone worthy of hell, etc. is completely different. Jesus shows this quite well in Matthew 7. Furthermore, all you have to do is peruse the pages of the New Testament to see extremely sinful rulers and adamant sinners (those who do as they please while trumpeting the don't judge slogan) are called out on a regular basis, from Herod by John the Baptists to several people within and out of the church by Paul.

It truly disappoints me that my message of the Gospel and God being all truth makes you cringe. Fear is what is lacking in most Christians lives today because in the end, they believe they can do as they please with no real consequences for their actions. They are taught a God who loves them no matter what and would never, ever, hurt them or send them to hell. Proverbs 1:7 tells us the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.

We can't come to the Lord without the fear and loathing of ourselves and realizing how wrong we are and how RIGHT He is. It is an ever present reality and to give credence to someone's BELIEFS or gods, or ideas or philosophies as possibly being true is the exact opposite of that faith a believer receives when being born again.

Not that we hide our head in the sand as if other religions don't exist, but for those who are called by His name, there is only One God and one Lord and any other message, or interpretation, or belief should make YOU, Mr. Walker, CRINGE inside because that is blasphemy to your Lord.

As for hiding behind some screen name, that was my choice to do to protect myself since I didn't know personally Mr. Ken Summers or the website he is on. That is just good internet etiquette. But it is your choice for sure to do as you please in that area.

I will continue to pray for you Mr. Walker that God open your eyes to the truth you claim to follow. I will also pray that He leads and guides you and your family into all truth and all love and that He richly bless you and keep you and that this only be the beginning of your renewed life in Him. I am nothing without Him and have made many mistakes. I do have a hunger and thirst for His Word and only His salvation of my soul, and my faithfulness and calling as a Teacher of God qualifies me to tell anyone anything.

As for our debate, I see no debate for you and I rather than is God's Word final and His Word Truth for all including Mr. Summers? THAT is the debate Mr. Walker.

- Mitch walker

04/28/2014 at 7:21 AM

Well sir my point that I am trying to make to you does nothing to prove I am denying God I am trying to say to you sir there is another side of the coin you base your entire argument on scripture an that is what I am talking about not everyone follows the scriptures personally I do but because I made an effort to introduce you to reality by looking at the other side of the coin you say I deny God? Really? I was merely trying to get you to see that everyone does not follow the word of God an to those people your argument is moot I never claimed to be one of those people but you were quick to put me in that catagory why can you not discuss this without going to the Bible to back up your point? I will give you an A for effort in the quoting from the Bible an sir if you will go back an read my first reply to Mr. Summers you will see that we are on the same side in regard to the way people view those of us from nwga have a great day sir

■ Trion Resident

04/28/2014 at 3:04 PM

To Mitch Walker, thank for taking an overall kinder tone. As for introducing me to reality, I'm well aware that people serve other gods and goddesses and deities as I fully expressed in my post, but for me and followers of Christ, God is the only One and true God.

It DOESN'T concern me with WHAT Mr. Summers or anyone else believes because I'm not here on Earth to "understand" others beliefs and why they believe as they do. One of the main missions of a Christian is to spread the Gospel and in doing so, a Christian can't back down from their beliefs or soften their message because others don't believe the same.

There is a very real hell and all who refuse Him will find their eternity within its confines. My job is to tell the truth and often times, the truth is the very thing that no one wants to hear, as was the case with Jesus in His day with the so-called elders and leaders of the church.

If we want to discuss ghosts and hauntings, I'm all for it, but if true debate can exist, it must be done so in a fair and unbiased format. Mr. Summers presented some of his story with a bias because he believes there is nothing wrong in breaking the 1st and 2nd commandment of the Bible Christians hold dear, and he finds nothing wrong with magic, the occult, etc. which the Bible STRICTLY forbids.

So his writing reflected his viewpoints rather than just cold hard truth. It is hard I submit to be unbiased when writing about something, but if one wished to maintain the best possible picture of something historical, that is what one must strive to do.

Therefore, I felt it necessary to express the other side of the coin as you put it since Mr. Summers had put forward via his writing that homosexuality was acceptable and okay and that witchcraft, the occult, etc. were not something that was wrong.

But please remember, as a Christian, our argument is never moot, and our stand is never in vain if we speak what is right. We can't abandon our beliefs even for a moment to placate or pacify someone around us who doesn't believe. We don't have to be forceful with those who simply don't know Christ, but for those who do know and yet mock the truth or refuse to acknowledge their wrong while justifying their wrongs and throwing their fists in the air daring God to do anything by their actions aren't exactly deserving of grace or a gentle spirit beseeching them to Christ.

It seems our conversations are coming around and we are able to be more sincere which I am truly thankful for. I am hopeful that my correspondance with Mr. Summers is also becoming more productive and now that each of us (Mr. Summers and I) know where each stand, we can move on to the true subject matter of this site and this Corpsewood, Ghosts, etc.

Coincidentally, are you yourself interested in ghosts, hauntings, etc? and how do you

rectify that with the Bible? Have a great day Mr. Walker.

2. Les

02/10/2014 at 3:00 PM

Wasn't the motive pure greed? Brock and West were looking for money that's why they ransacked the place. I also see a gay on gay crime since Brock was apparently there on previous occasions looking for a sexual relationship then coming away with the idea the two men were rich. Maybe the murder had a vengeful aspect as well since the two victims apparently refused Brock's advances.

Scudder and Odem were two friendly fellows who wanted to live in peace. It sounds like they would have invited anyone in for a cup of coffee or wine and a good chat. How sad that their friendliness towards strangers caused them to fall into the hands of such men.

Reply

• Ken Summers

02/11/2014 at 4:14 AM

I'm not sure you could say it was pure greed. Robbery was part of the motive, but you don't have to blow off someone's face to rob them.

What Brock and West were doing there to me always seemed like being hustlers, getting drinks and such in exchange for sexual favors. It's not uncommon for a straight swindler to use sex as a tool to get what he wants. Spend enough time at any run-down gay bar and you'll see it for yourself. It doesn't make Brock and West gay (they did have girlfriends); it just means they were willing to secretly be bisexual if they could get something out of it.

But at the same time they were trying to befriend them to gain access to the house. Or maybe that was part of the hustle too… to finally gain access to the bedroom. Given that Brock was 17, they probably refused him because it's illegal and he could've blackmailed them.

Reply

3. Cullan Hudson

02/10/2014 at 4:04 PM

Awesome story, Ken. I need to read your account as well. I was familiar with the story, but you really paint a picture here. Don't know why I've dragged my feet in getting your book. So many books, so little time.

Reply

• Ken Summers

02/11/2014 at 4:19 AM

Thanks, Cullan! I think that's what gave me such nightmares. I compiled all the accounts and wrote it from the perspective of being there as an observer. Some retellings of the events are slightly different, but most of these details came from police questioning of the suspects afterward.

Reply

4. alanborky

02/10/2014 at 4:41 PM

'what did Scudder mean by his final words, "I asked for this"?'

He could've in his own terms been takin' responsibility for his imminent death thereby snatchin' away from his killers the sense his fate was merely a matter of their whim.

Reply

Ken Summers

02/11/2014 at 4:16 AM

Considering that he was staring down a rifle, refusing to stop to get to the Odom's body, you might very well be right.

Reply

5. Johnnie Gray

02/22/2014 at 9:30 AM

It was great running into this story again. It is my favorite from your book. I think the isolation of the house and unknown practices of the owners add to the creepiness.

Reply

6. Prince Petropia

03/01/2014 at 12:18 AM

Very nice article indeed. I found WF? some days ago and have become a fan ever since. By the way, have you read about the Hinterkaifeck murders? Just finished writing an elaborate article on them on my blog, please give it a read: http://allaboutoccult.blogspot.in/2014/02/the-hinterkaifeck-murders.html

Reply

7. Michael

03/15/2014 at 3:16 PM

First, I drive through Summerville a few times a year…it is quite beautiful, and while I live in metro-Atlanta, Summerville (and the rest of rural Georgia) are not bastions of tolerance. There are hippie/enclaves spread around, but for the most part it's just regular folks who mind their own business. Still, gay Satanists wouldn't exactly be welcomed in a place like Summerville…secret Wiccans abound, but they're…secret Wiccans. For the record, I'm Christian, but I'm also "live and let live". I mean…it's an easy standard. Anyway…white trash proto-criminal 17-year old, sexually confused boy-man and his older buddy murder folks in the woods. It is a scary story…and people are WAY scarier than ghosts.

As for the conversation about "homicide". While they are used as synonyms by most people, homicide and murder are not the same thing. All murders are homicides, but not all homicides are murder. There is no such thing as justifiable murder. Justifiable homicide is a very real thing…self-defense, killing in wartime, and accidents. Murder is murder. These two committed murder, plain and simple.

Reply

8. Chad Floyd

03/17/2014 at 2:50 PM

Just bad judgment by the professor letting the murders come to his hidden castle in the woods. Sad today as it was even then is to place trust in people you know and even people you don't know. I live an hour from the manor and have been there a couple of times. It looked to be a beautiful place at one time from the layout of the property. Sad that it is in the shape that it is in now. Was a good book with great pic's about the murders but it is very hard to find. The pic's of the bedroom you have are very interesting since I have never seen them before. Do you have anymore pics? These two men were murdered in cold blood, being different of course but who were they bothering where they lived?? Nobody. And today they wouldn't be any different than all the other folks who live this way. It wasn't living this way that got them murdered it was the secluded place and someone thinking they had lots of cash stashed away that did it. Just a sad story and I hate that it happened to these to guys that from my research were to very polite and quite fellows.

Reply

9. Monica

03/21/2014 at 7:49 AM

I have been here and taken photos… All have orbs in them. All have "smudges." Something still lurks in those woods.

Reply

10. Neo

03/25/2014 at 8:20 AM

Folks that associated with LaVey seem to wind up dead in grizzly ways, such as Jayne Mansfield.

Reply

11. mitch walker

04/09/2014 at 9:30 PM

you know growing up in NW Ga. and living here today, I am surprised at how people from else where seem to think that the folks of NW Ga. are all a bunch of bigoted biased stereotypical "hillbillies" nothing could be further from the truth, if you take the time to get to know the people in this area you will find a decent hard working lot, who don't take to strangers very well for this very reason, Scudder and Odom were not outcast in this area, yeah they were seen as a little odd but not outcast devil worshippers as people like to make them out to be. People would be surprised of the good things these two men done for the area and NEVER wanted it to be known what they did, it was a way of giving back to the area that was home for them. go spend some time in Summerville, talk to the people who were there then, not the ones who only want to repeat the false stories they have heard about, and you will take away a whole new outlook of this area.

Reply

- Ken Summers

04/12/2014 at 11:11 AM

I'm sorry… I didn't mean to make it sound like Georgia is some backwater full of hilljacks with no common sense. Maybe it's my own experience in less populated areas of Ohio and West Virginia that shows me the very conservative side of more remote areas, coupled with what I've heard from friends who've visited and told me it's a rather dangerous area. Still, don't get me wrong… I have friends–and have even been in relationships with–people who fall under the "hillbilly" stereotype.

Like most ghost stories and murder cases, people have lots of opinions. Over the years, I've heard far more from the people in support of the murderers than the contrary. Naturally, everyone has their supporters. But I have heard from people who befriended Scudder and Odom as well in the local area, which is always wonderful.

I try to be unbiased when I write about any people or places, but sometimes it doesn't quite come across that way. In this case, I think it's more a case of befriending the wrong people than the entire Summerville area being some horrible bigoted place.

Reply

- mitch walker

04/13/2014 at 1:07 AM

Mr. Summers, actually it wasn't you so much I was talking about, I loved your take on this horrible thing, and how you presented it, you seemed to put a more personal slant on this, and I enjoyed reading your work. And as a writer myself, (also talk show host I cover dirt track racing) I understand your point about you never have a way of

befriending that gives you a unbiased view, you just have to take it with a grain of salt, so to speak. I have been to corpsewood many times over the years and it is truly a unique place, and I too know folks who have taken items from there and some of who were not what you would call believers so to speak before, but are very much so now, thanks for taking the time to respond and I look forward to reading more of your work,
"the dr."
Mitch Walker

Reply

- roberts

09/21/2014 at 7:30 AM

I've been really in to this story for years now it was a secret to me all my life until about 7 years ago when I learned that tony west is my moms 1st cousin.we visited the house of corps wood several years back as we headed in the woods it was day lite it was a long walk so as we headed out it got dark the only light we had was my cell phone. We got maybe 20 min down and the camera on the phone started goin off there was a lot of sounds and the noises like some one was running.very scary feeling being up there…I was only two years old when this happen I would like to see more pics

Reply

12. Cyn Heretic

09/24/2014 at 2:09 PM

I am just now reading about this murder for the first time. I appreciate the way you have written it. To me it seems like a classic example of a modern day hate-crime: The victims were murdered specifically because of either their sexual orientation or their religious beliefs. For the record, I am a Southerner, and hail from the Heart of Dixie. Tolerance was practically non-existent in those days. We have made much improvements, but there will always be places of regress no matter the geography.

Personally I don't glean from the story what your own beliefs are and I don't read much bias. The beginning comments had me scratching my head, Trion Resident seems to, well, he has answered for himself.

Is this property still vacant today? Do you know if it can still be visited?
I would be interested in learning more and for myself very interested in actually seeing the location if possible.

Condolences to these men's (Scudder and Odom) families for their loss.

Reply

13. jay

10/16/2014 at 7:43 PM

The ground at corpsewood is tainted i wander the mountains in trion and summerville on a daily and have many stories of well unexplained events which may as well have come from the shine lol….

Reply

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As university politics and "unruly medical students" became more and more unbearable, Scudder felt the need to escape the chaotic, busy city life according to an article he wrote about his uprooting for *Mother Earth News* in 1981. He found 40 acres of woodland in northern Georgia for sale—miles away from the nearest neighbors—and once he saw it for himself, he bought it. On his 50th birthday, he resigned from Loyola University, sold off nearly everything he owned, and set off with Odom to begin a new, peaceful life in the Appalachians. Living out of a camper on the property, the men built their brick mansion by hand, just the two of them. Upon seeing the endless stand of barren trees around them that first winter, they chose a fitting name for their new home: Corpsewood.

Scudder and Odom lived simply in their two-story home. A wood stove provided heat, a chemical toilet served as an outhouse, and they grew their own food. Behind the house was a small vineyard for making homemade wine. Though he was an atheist, Scudder was fascinated by religions and the occult and adorned the interior with all manner of strange object and antique. In front, a pink-painted concrete gargoyle overlooked a rose garden tended to by Odom. Beside the house was a three-story chicken house, the top floor of which was nicknamed the "Pink Room" and served as a recreation room for socializing with guests.

In the winter of 1982, everything changed. What follows is a detailed chain of events, pieced together through meticulous research into newspaper archives and testimonies of the time, telling the true tale of what happened at Corpsewood Manor:

Brock and West in 1982

"In November of 1982, Kenneth Avery Brock moved into the Halls Valley trailer of a 30-year-old unemployed construction worker by the name of Samuel Tony West. The 17-year-old part-time truck driver told West the tale of "queer devil-worshipers" living in the isolated country. Brock first met the couple while hunting deer on their property. He befriended them and spent many occasions drinking their homemade wine. Their relationship soon escalated; Brock may have become intimately involved with the men on numerous occasions (others speculate that Brock attempted to initiate a threesome with the couple but was denied). Scudder and Odom's relaxed demeanor and effortless existence gave Brock the false impression that Scudder and Odom stockpiled an immense fortune. The vivid mind of 17-year-old Brock convinced Tony West they could become wealthy beyond their wildest dreams.

In a small town where rumors and gossip became gospel, Brock and West fell under the spell: blinded by greed. Disillusioned by their downtrodden lives, the duo hatched a plot to rob the couple of their fortune and run away, free to live their lives as they had always dreamed. After hatching the burglary plan with West, Brock's visits took on new meaning. In November of 1982, he visited the "castle in the woods" several times in an attempt to study the layout of the house. Unfortunately, his sexual encounters with Scudder and Odom were limited to the Pink Room and he was never granted entry into Corpsewood Manor.

Crime scene photograph of the ransacked bedroom inside Corpsewood

On the evening of December 12, 1982, the plan was set into motion. Brock made a stop at his mother's trailer to pick up a .22 caliber Remington automatic rifle "to use rabbit hunting". The duo stopped to visit Joey Wells and offered to take him and his date, Teresa Hudgins, out joyriding. West and Brock suggested a visit to Corpsewood to drink some of their wine. While Joey was thrilled with the notion of free alcohol, Teresa was hesitant to meet the "devil-worshipers". Convinced by the others that it would be fun, she finally relented. The four individuals slowly traveled through the hilly roads of Taylor Ridge, huffing a combination of paint thinner, alcohol, and glue called toot-a-loo. Teresa peered down at the rifle tucked between the front seats.

Charles greeted his unannounced visitors and bummed a cigarette for Odom, who was in the kitchen cleaning up after supper. Their visitors climbed the 40-foot ladder to the Pink Room, accompanied by Scudder. Wine was passed and the gathering became merry. Shortly thereafter, Brock stepped out to his car to get more toot-a-loo. He reappeared with his rifle minutes later, returning to his seat on the mattress.

Charles Scudder stifled a giggle. "***Bang, bang***," he uttered, amused in his mild intoxication.

When Scudder stood to adjust a lantern, Brock leapt into action. He grabbed the former professor by the hair, slid a knife from out of his military boot, and pressed it against Scudder's throat. Brock demanded money and tossed the professor onto the mattress. He cut strips of pin cloth from the sheets and bound Scudder in his heavy coat. West and Hudgins were terrified and ran to the car, but the engine refused to start. As they headed back to the Pink Room, they could hear Brock's desperate, angry demands.

West stood up and handed Brock the rifle. Odom was interrupted in the kitchen by Brock ordering him out of the house. He looked up toward the doorway as Brock fired four rounds into Odom. Several more finished off the mastiffs, which never moved from their comfortable spot beside the wood stove.

Brock returned to the Pink Room and lead Scudder back to the house. The professor was ushered into the house where the gruesome scene met his eyes. As he stood over the bodies of his deceased lover and beloved mastiffs, a muffled moan escaped from beneath his gag. He knew the end was near.

Brock led him into the library, pulled down the pink gag in Scudder's mouth, and sat him in a chair. Charles stood one final time and shuffled in his bound feet toward Odom's body. West demanded that he stop. As he continued his slow movement, intently gazing at Odom's corpse, Charles Scudder uttered his final words.

"***I asked for this.***"

West shot Scudder in the face at close range. Falling to his knees, Charles attempted to speak and stand. West fired again, sending the professor reeling backward into the bookcase. Scudder gurgled out unintelligible sounds as West fired three more shots into Scudder's head.

Crime scene photograph of the master bedroom, dirty clothes still littering the floor.

West and Brock ransacked the house searching for the hidden fortune. They left with only a handful of dimes and nickels, bits of jewelry, silver candelabras, and a gold-plated dagger. The gold harp was too large to take with them. Less than two hours after arriving, the visitors left, splitting up between West's red 1970 AMC Javelin and Scudder's black CJ-5 Jeep with white pentacles painted on the doors.

Raymond Williams visited Corpsewood two days later to notify the couple of the passing of a friend in Rome, Georgia. He noticed bullet holes in the green kitchen door and called the police. West and Brock fled, but each was apprehended without incident.

During West's confession to Chattooga County Sheriff Tony Gilleland, the suspect stated, "***All I can say is they were devils and I killed them, that's how I feel about it.***"

As the trial went underway, Scudder and Odom were labeled "homosexual devil-worshipers". Being reclusive made the victims easy targets for bigotry and hatred. Scudder had joined the Church of Satan "to see what it was like", according to his friend Raymond Williams. While inverted pentagrams are a common symbol in satanic imagery, the religion itself does not idolize Satan. LaVeyan (or symbolic) Satanism, as practiced by the Church of Satan, does not worship a deity; they worship the self. The devil is used as a symbol of humankind's inner desires and is closely related to atheism. While the victims did possess some occult items and satanic artifacts, their religious beliefs did not affect their character.

Defense attorneys argued that the two murderers were given wine laced with LSD by Scudder, yet no evidence supported these claims. While on staff at the Strich School of Medicine at Loyola, the victim had been the Assistant Director of the Institute for the Study of Mind, Drugs and Behavior. Three vials of LSD-25 were found in a cigar box in Scudder's desk. The defense attempted to prove that the murderers had been drugged and were temporarily insane at the time of the crimes, yet no trace of hallucinogenic drugs was found in the wine at the scene."

The headboard in the Master Bedroom depicting a "devilish" head on the right.

Two white crosses placed at Corpsewood for Charles and Joey in memoriam.

Corpsewood Manor ruins at night in 2006.

While in jail, Brock attempted suicide. At trial, he was found guilty on all counts and sentenced to three consecutive life terms. He is currently serving his sentence in Georgia State Prison. Samuel T. West was convicted of double homicide and sentenced to die in the electric chair. The death sentence was repealed and he is currently serving out his life sentence at Augusta State Medical Prison.

There was a small private funeral ceremony held at Corpsewood. Odom's ashes were scattered in his rose garden. Scudder's body was sent home to Milwaukee at the request of his sister.

Even during the police investigation, officers reported a feeling of being watched and a strange presence at Corpsewood. People who took souvenirs from the crime and house home with them reported bad luck and felt the objects were cursed. Even today, people visiting the site report shadows and apparitions believed to be Odom and Scudder. Gunshots, barking dogs, and shattering glass—as well as haunting melodies played on Scudder's golden harp—have been heard there. After nightfall, some witnesses have claimed to see the glowing eyes of Beelzebub, one of Scudder's mastiffs, staring at them from the woods.

But far more terrifying than any ghostly reports are the events which played out at Corpsewood that winter night. Charles Scudder was an inactive member of the Anton LaVey's Church of Satan. In the wake of the murders, LaVey was angered by what happened to Scudder and Odom and the "injustice of what happened to them." He viewed the double homicide as proof that there were still parts of the United States where eccentric individuals could be attacked for having what some people might view as abnormal beliefs.

And what did Scudder mean by his final words, "*I asked for this*"? Were they implying his befriending the wrong people and inviting them into his home or alluding to moving to an intolerant area with his partner? Or was it much deeper than that? Months before the incident, Charles Scudder painted a self-portrait that implies he may have had a premonition of his own death. In the painting, Scudder was gagged and had five bullet wounds.

Ken Summers

Ken Summers is a historical researcher, author of the book *Queer Hauntings*, and contributor/resident ghost geek for Who Forted? who started poking around northeast Ohio for spooks just before GHI was born. After too much paradrama, he went solo with his website Moonspenders, leaving the super-serious "investigating" to the most staunch believers. Ken finds himself lost somewhere between "too smart to believe everything" and optimistic curiosity mixed with wishful thinking. He's had a handful of strange experiences that certainly fall under the category of "unexplained". Secretly, he wants to marry a werewolf and build a fully-functioning TARDIS.

1. Raven Storm

02/10/2014 at 7:25 AM

Justifiable homicide!? When is homicide justified? Take away all the "weirdness" factors and you have murder, plain and simple. Two innocent people lost their lives over someone else's greed and ignorance. That place is saturated with sadness.

Reply

- Ken Summers

02/10/2014 at 7:44 AM

I just meant the textbook definition of "justifiable homicide", meaning "a killing without evil or criminal intent, for which there can be no blame, such as self-defense to protect oneself or to protect another." West and Brock did try to argue that they were drugged with LSD.

But personally speaking, I agree with you completely! I've never liked how some people have tried portraying them as sexual predators, drug abusers, and demon worshipers so horrible there was reason to kill them. Believe me, I've had a lot of people weigh in with their opinions of the case and you'd be surprised what some people have to say about it.

Then again, being rural Georgia, you might not be so surprised.

Reply

- Trion Resident

04/19/2014 at 5:17 PM

The fact is, you know very little besides what you've been told about this incident. I've lived here all of my life. These men weren't looked on badly by most anyone while they were alive for being gay. While I DO NOT support such a degenerate lifestyle since I am a Christian, and it is clear you are nothing of the sort, Christians are called to love all and that is basically how they were accepted, except for people who found their ways odd in regards to the occult.

Most of the people in the area went up and drank with them and not many had a bad word to say about them. You also only reported what you liked to report. The fact is, if someone has countless books about Christianity, has crosses all over the yard, windows, and other Christian symbols, it is PRETTY safe to assume they at least believe in or used to believe in Christianity.

Scudder WAS a member of the church of satan and he was intensely interested in the occult. When is reality, reality to people like you? If it walks like a duck and quacks like a duck... It is almost certainly a DUCK. This man was enarmored for his appreciation of the occult and even had an altar there on the property. He was not an atheist, but did NOT believe in Christanity or any formal religion of the world.

As to why Brock and West did what they did, I don't know, but when Scudder uttered his last words, he knew exactly what he was talking about and it wasn't that he was suffering because people in Trion (where it actually happened and NOT Summerville) were intollerable. He chose his path and that was where it led him. There were rumors that Scudder had molested one of the men and that this was as much of a revenge killing as much as it was a pathetic robbery.

Either way, when you are asking for people's opinions, and TRULY want unbiased ideas to flow, don't insert so much of your own bias, because it is plain to see you are a godless atheist who abhors those who DARE not hug homosexuality around its neck, as well as those who REFUSE to worship or be involved with worshiping any other god.

That is KIND OF what the 1st and 2nd Commandment is ALL about and Charles Scudder broke those commandments as if they were his favorite desserts.

Reply

- Ken Summers

04/19/2014 at 5:57 PM

Isn't the whole "hate the sin not the sinner" cliche a little overplayed? The idea of "I love everyone, even those rotten, filthy, horrid degenerates" (yes, I'm paraphrasing) always seemed so contradictory to the "love thy neighbor" and "let he who is without sin cast the first stone" ideals. I get the strange feeling you're one of those people who think Halloween should be eradicated from the earth for being too 'pagan'. You're not doing such a good job at painting the area as a paradise of tolerance and brotherly love, especially since in your last sentence you cast very strong judgement on Scudder himself.

Nevertheless, I never claimed to be an expert on Corpsewood, and while I may inject my own opinion on the murders, I do my best to state only known facts concerning the case that I'm aware of. I've heard a lot of people telling me many, many tales of who those men were and what all they did when they were alive, ranging from the mundane to the outright absurd. But it's facts that I draw much of my speculation from. It is my understanding that Scudder had a collection of many items related to many religions, not strictly Satanism (which is technically a version of Atheism, not the worship of the devil), therefore I can't assume he was of any one religion. I myself have decorative skulls, Wiccan items, divination tools, and even a collection of occult books in my bedroom. But to draw any conclusion from them as to my own personal beliefs may be completely false.

I believe that everyone has the right to believe in whatever deity or god they choose to believe in (or not believe in). There is nothing wrong or immoral about believing or not believing in anything. What I do take issue with is when someone uses their beliefs to bolster themselves or make someone else out to be inferior. So don't tell me in one breath that you're all tolerance, love, and light when in the next breath you're essentially telling me that "the heathen deserved what happened to him."

It's that sort of Puritanical fire-and-brimstone talk that gives Christianity a bad name.

Reply

▪ Trion Resident

04/23/2014 at 8:13 AM

First of all, the Bible doesn't state to hate the sin, love the sinner. God HATES adamant sinners like yourself, period. Psalm 5:5, 11:5. Christians are to love all, but NOT to accept all or to "TOLERATE" (Liberals nice word) all. Jesus NEVER "TOLERATED" those who were willfully and deliberately sinners. From the Pharisess, to those who blasphemed Him, to John the Baptist calling out even Herod, as well as the Pharisees, calling them "brood of vipers" which effectively means, family of demons.

Paul ALSO, called out sinners who did harm to the church as well as hypocrites within the church. You know nothing of Christianity at least from the Bible and are only regurgitating the lies that have been perpetuated in the church since the 70's and 80's via the soft Gospel and the Gospel of You, where the saint gets EVERYTHING they want from health, wealth, etc., because they are SO special.

I could get the SAME thing from guru's, but that won't lead me to Jesus or repentance, or the truth that I'm hopeless without Christ and that my sins are black, and ugly and are treason against God who is the Creator of this world and the Universe and all that we see.

You state that there is nothing wrong with you having books on the occult or studying them or believing in whatever you wish. This is your opinion and not truth, and you would tell me the same thing, but somehow you think you get a free pass by making absolute conjectures, but somehow I can't be afforded the same latitude.

It is your choice for sure to believe as you wish, but you can't define right and wrong, no more than I can. God is our Creator and He alone decides what is right and what is wrong and you and I are His creations who can no more decide truth, or right, or wrong, or good or bad, than a worm outside in my yard. He is all truth and from Him, we can know what is right, or wrong, or good or bad.

As I stated, you produced a slanted and somewhat infactual view of what happened here. Scudder was liked by basically everyone he knew and I have NEVER heard a bad report

from ANYONE that met him. So no, no one around here "judged" him for his homosexuality. Some did find his "lifestyle" odd and his choice of "religions", but that was all.

Of note, my Dad was the one who went to film the shootings (he was a news anchor for the local TV station at the time), along with Gary McConnnell who was Sheriff at the time. I've also been there multiple times, recorded, done research extensively, also have read the corpsewood book, and have even experienced things there myself. So I do know a little something about this place and incident.

But as for you, you'd do much better at being more neutral in your writings in the future and while I realize that my writings wouldn't be acceptable to MOST non-Christians and therefore would never write for a secular news organization since they wouldn't accept my beliefs, your writing doesn't lend itself to a large audience either.

Have a great day and may you be found by the one true God and may He enrich, refresh, and energize your life.

Reply

■ Mitch walker

04/24/2014 at 7:45 AM

Trion resident with all due respect you are one of the ones who give Christians a bad name. Your talking out of both sides of your mouth bashing the writer in one line an in the next line saying none of us can tell right from wrong only God can You bash the writer for having books on the occult but you talk about doing extensive research on the place an admit to having experiences yourself if you don't like the story then curl back up in your self righteous ways an don't read it. Your fire an brimstone views will convert no one here nor any where else for that manner do you really believe that your faith give you the inside scoop on what is right an what is wrong? To you the Bible may be the final truth but that don't make it so for those who don't choose to follow the word of God. I do follow the word of God but your view on this makes me cringe come down off your high horse an read what you have written if you can't see the double standard your trying to apply then your farther gone than I realized

■ Trion Resident

04/25/2014 at 4:48 AM

Mitch Walker, if you believed in God, you'd recognize Him as the truth and life and way and NO OTHER. The Christian life isn't always an easy one, but it is a rewarding one. I realize today in the SOFT society we live in that ABSOLUTES will get you branded intolerant or bigot or homophobe, or "fire and brimstone" or any other derogatory name people like you can come up with while "supposedly" claiming Christianity yourself.

The God of the Bible DOES not allow the worship of other gods. However, occultic practices also have rules that its worships adhere to and I see no one bashing that. All religions have rules and regulations to follow and obey, but only Christianity is labeled as intolerant. Odd isn't it?

I only spoke what was right and if YOU don't believe that God above has the final say on what is right or wrong, HOW can you claim to believe in God's Word? You charge me with lies or half-truths, yet state nothing that I've stated that is wrong. This is the way of deceivers and those who have weak arguments. They just name call and provide no facts.

I have been very interested in the Corpsewood Murders since the day my Dad filmed it. I have had many personal experiences with spirits, etc. and unlike most people who claim Christianity, ghosts are throughout the Bible. It isn't stated what their purpose is, or why they sometimes manifest, but it is clear that they do.

Therefore, I have had a keen interest in matters like Corpsewood and other locations of similar activity because of my HUGE desire for knowledge, truth and facts, and because of my past experiences. My problem I had with the author is that he presented his material in a slanted and somewhat infactual or half-truth way, inserting some snipits from the book, etc. while leaving out other parts that would not justify his slant.

How is THIS any different than me putting forward what you would call my "Slant" even though you claim to believe in the same God I do and follow the same Bible I do. So since he offered a slant, I rectified this by offering another point of view that was (if you will slanted toward the Gospel) and was a more factual view of what really happened here.

I didn't take kindly to our people here being labeled as some backwoods hillbillies who sneer every time they still see a black man. As for giving Christianity a bad name, I'm afraid in God's eyes, Mitch, you give Christianity a bad name and are a bad example of what a Christian is. You crucify someone who tells you the truth while siding with a man who mocks the very religion you claim to uphold.

You are truly on the wrong side of the fence, and I would encourage you to pray, repent and to actually read about the God you claim to love since it is obvious you have read very little and have been "told" much by pastor's who "preach" a soft Christianity with little to no guilt for our actions and no consequences for them either, teaching freedom when they themselves are slaves to sin, greed, money and power.

I would put forward that if you were to take the money away from the majority of the people you have listened to, they would NOT be "preachers" anymore because they are the ones in John 10:10 that Jesus speaks of and NOT the devil.

I will pray for you Mitch that God convicts your soul, and shines a light down on you giving you wisdom, insight, and a thirst and hunger to read His Word, and not BOOKS by Christians about the Bible. A Christian and believer in God should saturate themselves in His Word having it as their constant guiding light so that when situations like this arise, it is obvious what is right and what is wrong.

All men have a freewill it is true. However, all men who are called in Christ have an obligation to defend the Gospel at all cost and this my brother in Christ you have failed to do at least today. I would pray though that tomorrow, you will not fail the test, and will see Mr. Summers for who he really is and that isn't a friend, or a comrade, but someone who is desperately lost and an enemy of and accuser of the brethem and of God.

I will however pray that Mr. Summers be born again and that he use his talent and knowledge for the kingdom of Heaven and be an effective voice and defender of the Gospel. May God be with you all.

- Ken Summers

04/25/2014 at 11:11 AM

If you read my article, you'll notice that aside from the opening and closing, I keep it very "Just the facts, Ma'am" in content. The "homosexual devil-worshipers" was pulled from a newspaper headline of the time. Almost everything directly relating to the details of the incident and trial came from newspapers–which includes statements from police on the scene as well as the murderers themselves. I'm not here to make moral judgments; I'm here to tell the story of what happened and offer some thoughts and let the readers think for themselves.

But you're right. I'm Satan's vessel. I thought it was just indigestion or bad gas or those stuffed jalapenos, but boy, was I wrong. And I would've gotten away with it too, if it weren't for you meddling kids!

- Trion Resident

04/25/2014 at 1:11 PM

Do I really have to spell it out Mr. Summers. While most of what you wrote was spot on, you did write at times with a bias and pasted and posted what you felt made your point of view viable. Here are some of your words below.

"Being openly gay in certain parts of the United States has always been dangerous."
I would like to know when ONE person was severely hurt for just being gay here in Chattooga County.

"But the exact events surrounding the deaths of Charles Scudder and Joseph Odom still are topics of debate and angry words around Summerville, Georgia"
I've talked to several people that went up to the "castle" and knew the men. I haven't myself heard ONE BAD word about them. Some I've talked to stated they were a little weird, but they generally liked them and drank with them.

"Tales of satanic worship, rape, and drugging with LSD have muddied the crime and made the victims seem less like your average gay couple and more like evil inhuman beings."
While that may have been the case with lawyers, that wasn't really the case with citizens who know facts about the crime, much less the men themselves. So you are stero-typing and using MUCH conjecture, thus a very slanted point of view to justify your bias towards those who DON'T share your beliefs about homosexuality.

"Though he was an atheist, Scudder was fascinated by religions and the occult and adorned the interior with all manner of strange object and antique. In front, a pink-painted concrete gargoyle overlooked a rose garden tended to by Odom. Beside the house was a three-story chicken house, the top floor of which was nicknamed the "Pink Room" and served as a recreation room for socializing with guests."
Again, conjecture. Scudder was no more an atheist than I am. He believed strongly in what he understood about the occultic/spirit world and was a avid student of such. The reason you abhor Christianity is because it grieves your spirit horrendously, while you want to "protect" Hindu's, Muslim's, Buddhists, etc. Odd, isn't it?

"Charles Scudder was an inactive member of the Anton LaVey's Church of Satan."
Again, extreme conjecture. Scudder had just received mail correspondence wishing him a Happy Birthday, using his birthdate when he joined the church of satan and not his actual birth date.

To imply that Scudder joined the church JUST to see what it was like is hogwash. If so, he would have joined the Wiccans, Masons, and other various groups as a free thinking man to "see what it was like." But he didn't, did he? He knew what he believed, unlike yourself because you desire to make light of his actions as if everyone is CRAZY if they believe this man and his partner ACTUALLY believed in and worshipped the devil in some form. That's called propaganda and brain washing, as well as re-direction and manipulation.

"And what did Scudder mean by his final words, "I asked for this"? Were they implying his befriending the wrong people and inviting them into his home or alluding to moving to an intolerant area with his partner?"
Again, conjecture on your part. We don't know with 100% certainty what he was thinking, but we can be pretty sure his last words were motivated because of his recent painting. If you want to do a factual piece, then do so, but you must remove yourself form it. If you want to do an opinionated piece, then state so.

Have a great day Mr. Summers.

- Ken Summers

04/25/2014 at 3:15 PM

The first paragraph is called an *introductory paragraph*, leading in to the topic. It starts

February 1, 2013Andrew Kincaid

Japanese Kleenex commercial

America has a whole host of urban legends surrounding television shows and movies. Probably the most famous is the legend of the cursed movie set, which claims that for years after the movie *Poltergeist* was filmed, actors and producers all met terrible fates. Similar claims were made for the cast of *The Exorcist*, and probably several other movies I'm not aware of. The point is that the cursed set is a staple of entertainment related urban legends. These sorts of stories aren't limited to the US, however. Japan has its own strange entry into the canon of cursed sets: the Curse of the Kleenex Commercial.

A series of Kleenex commercials aired in the Eighties that spawned the legend of the cursed commercial set. The version of the commercial I scrounged up featured a woman in white and a baby painted to look like an ogre or a demon. Legend has it the commercial features a strange song in German that says "die die" over and over, the tone of which changes based on the time of day. The commercial was said to bring bad luck as well. Thoroughly creeped out television viewers complained, and Kleenex pulled the ads.

But, legend has it, the trouble only began once the ad was pulled. The lead actress in the commercial supposedly suffered a mental breakdown and was institutionalized, while the baby died under mysterious circumstances. From producers to cameramen to gaffers, everyone even remotely related to the commercial died or suffered accidents or other misfortunes.

Now, of course, not much of that is true. It is true that the ads were pulled when people complained. The song in the ad was actually an English song called "It's a Fine Day", which while not German and not saying "die die", is still creepy in the context of the commercial, or so this fellow thinks. No one associated with the commercial died under mysterious circumstances that I can find, and the lead actress Keiko Matsuzaka is still alive and working as an actress to this day. So, while the commercial itself is bizarre, it's more an example of failed marketing than anything supernatural. See the commercial here [Author's note: *I had no end of trouble trying to embed the video. So I wound up taking a screen cap, which ALSO gave me no end of trouble. Is it the curse of the Kleenex commercial at work? Or just poor technical skills? I'll leave that for you to decide (hint: it's probably the latter)*].

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The dark side of the moon is turquoise, say astronomers

Ian Sample , science correspondent
Friday 10 January 2014

theguardian.com

In a demonstration of the power of science to ruin a perfectly respectable work of art, researchers have discovered the colour of the dark side of the moon.

Measurements from a telescope in Hawaii mean that pedants may now argue that, technically speaking, if one wanted to be entirely accurate, the side of the moon referred to in Pink Floyd's 1973 album The Dark Side of the Moon should really be described as "turquoise".

The revelation comes from two years of measurements by an international team of astronomers who installed a telescope and a sensitive camera at the Mauna Loa Observatory in Hawaii, run by the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

The dark side of the moon is not the same as the far side, which gets as much sunlight as the side facing us. The dark side is not lit directly by sunlight, but by light reflected from Earth. It is much fainter, and best seen around the time of the new moon.

"This is sunshine that struck the Earth, was coloured by the Earth, was reflected up to the moon, struck the moon, and then came back to us," said Peter Thejll, a senior scientist at the Danish Meteorological Institute in Copenhagen and first author on the study.

Images of Earth from space show clearly that the planet looks blue. But when this blue light strikes the moon, the light that's reflected back is turquoise.

"Astronauts standing on the moon and looking up at the Earth described it as a blue marble," said Thejll. "Having not been into space myself, I don't know what they meant exactly, but once that blue light strikes the moon's surface, it shifts to a blue-green colour. We can call it turquoise."

A waxing crescent moon with earthshine reflected from the 'dark side'. Note the halo around the bright, light side. Photograph: David Nunuk/Corbis

To measure the colour of the dark side of the moon, the astronomers had first to screen out light from the bright side that had been scattered by Earth's atmosphere. This scattered light produces a shifting halo around the moon and messes up measurements of the dark side. The same effect produces the familiar glow around street lamps seen from a distance.

The scientists snapped pictures of the moon through the

telescope using two different colour filters. Amid hundreds of images, they found a pair taken of the waning crescent moon on 18 January 2012 that had exactly the same halo. When they subtracted one image from the other, the halo disappeared and they could measure the true colour of the moon's dark side.

"We know how unlikely it is that the haloes should cancel out, and yet we found a pair where they did. That says something about the conditions on the night when we took those pictures. Something was unique so the two haloes were identical and they cancelled and frankly we don't know why," Thejll said.

"This is the first accurate colour measurement of the dark side of the moon," Thejll said. The last attempt was made in 1965 from an observatory near Bloemfontein in South Africa. Thejll's study has been accepted for publication in the journal Astronomy and Astrophysics.

Thejll said that observations of the dark side of the moon can help scientists to monitor the colour of the Earth. This could be useful for assessing climate change models, some of which predict changes in cloud cover.

"We have measured the same colour now as was seen in the 1960s and that might say something about what has happened to the Earth in the meantime, and it's consistent with there being no change in the amount of cloud," Thejll said. "But this was just one measurement, and the colour of the Earth changes on an hourly basis."

Surviving members of Pink Floyd were unavailable for comment.

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The day the Pintupi Nine entered the modern world

22December2014

bbc.com

In 1984 a group of Australian Aboriginal people living a traditional nomadic life were encountered in the heart of the Gibson desert in Western Australia. They had been unaware of the arrival of Europeans on the continent, let alone cars - or even clothes.

If you want to know how Australian Aboriginal peoples lived for 40,000 years, just ask Yukultji. She stepped into the 20th Century just 30 years ago. She is the youngest member of the Pintupi Nine, the last family of nomads to roam the territory around Lake Mackay, a vast glistening salt lake spanning 3,500 sq km (1,350 sq miles) between the Gibson and Great Sandy deserts of Western Australia.

"When I was young I would play on the sand dune and when we saw the old people returning to camp we would go back and see what food they had brought with them. After we ate we'd go to sleep. No blanket, we would sleep on the ground," says Yukultji.

"Then we would go to another waterhole and make another camp."

Before 1984, the Pintupi Nine lived just as their ancestors had done. Waterholes in this area are often 40km (25 miles) apart or more, and every day was spent walking in the relentless heat from one to another. "Sometimes there was no water, so we would hunt for goanna," says Yukultji. The blood of these monitor lizards provided vital moisture when a water soak was dry.

The three sisters Yukultji, Takariya and Yalti

The discovery of the group caused a media sensation, but headlines referring to the "lost

tribe" annoyed them - they weren't lost, they insist, just separated from their relatives, and other members of the Pintupi clan.

The Nine consisted of two sisters and their seven teenage children - four brothers and three sisters, who shared one father. So how had they become so isolated?

In the 1950s the British began conducting Blue Streak Missile tests over the Western Desert region, and the Australian government decided to "round up" the desert nomads and move them into settlements. All of the Pintupi were taken away apart from this one family, which was overlooked. From then on, suddenly alone in the desert, they saw very few signs of anyone else's existence.

Yukultji remembers seeing aircraft when she was very young. "The plane would fly over and we would hide in the tree. We would see the wings of the plane and we would get frightened. We thought it was the devil and so we kept hiding under the tree. When the plane had passed we would climb down from the tree."

Her older sister, Takariya, remembers coming across a plane that had crashed. "We found some rope in it and we tied it around our waist. We didn't know it was rope. We would tie it around our waist so that we could hang our goannas from it," she says.

Their father may have been aware of the settlements - the children remember him describing what must have been a sheep, but when they asked to be taken to see such a strange thing, he refused.

In the 60s and 70s Aboriginal people were allowed to move back to their land, but Kiwirrkurra community, where the Pintupi live, was only built in 1984, when a borehole was sunk there for the first time. It is the most remote community in Australia - a two-day, 700km (440-mile) drive from Alice Springs along a bright red sand track lined by Spinifex grasses, with an occasional cluster of Mulga trees.

Kiwirrkurra country

The creation of the settlement brought the Pintupi closer again to the family that had remained alone for up to 20 years. Those most closely related to the Pintupi Nine had often spoken about family members who were still "in the bush" and had not been accounted for - they had always wondered what had happened to them.

Warlimpirrnga, the eldest brother, and the head of the family after his father's death,

remembers the day that the family stumbled across other members of the clan.

"Start Quote

I tasted the sugar and it tasted so sweet - like the Kulun Kulun flower"

"We had just speared a kangaroo. We could smell the faeces of other humans in the air" - they were probably a couple of kilometres away - "and we saw smoke in the distance.

"We moved closer and stood on a rock and could see people camping down below. So I began to move closer to their camp. I ran towards where they were standing. Then I snuck over closer. I coughed. The people heard me. It looked like they were scared. They became frantic, running back and forth," he says.

"This is my grandfather's land," Warlimpirrnga said. One of the men started filling a billycan with water for them. "When he did, we thought, we won't spear him," says Warlimpirrnga. "They were so scared. They were really scared of us, scared out of their wits."

The campers were a Pintupi man, Pinta Pinta, and his son, Matthew, who had decided to set up an outstation at a place named Winbargo, 45km from Kiwirrkurra. The young man panicked and fired a shotgun in the air - all parties scattered, and the two men drove off at speed, despite a flat tyre.

"We heard the sound of that car long into the distance," says Warlimpirrnga.

This was the first time he and his brother Thomas had experienced running water, clothed people or a motor car.

Pinta Pinta and Matthew raced back to to tell the others what they had seen. We know their side of the story from the diaries of Charlie McMahon, now a well-known musician but back then the only "whitefella" helping 60 to 80 Pintupi to establish the community at Kiwirrkurra. They called him Murrahook, because he had a hook for an arm.

"Saturday, 13 October: Pinta Pinta and many others come to my camp late at night very excited; they relay the story of meeting two naked men," McMahon wrote. "They said one of the men, the tall one, came towards him at the hand pump, laying his spears on the ground as he approached and asked Pinta Pinta for water. Pinta Pinta worked the hand lever pump to fill up a billycan. Then his son Matthew fired a shotgun, blasted into the air. Pinta Pinta and his son were startled by the two naked, wild-men with spears... they thought they were *kaditcha* or evil spirits."

By the following day, the community had calmed down sufficiently to realise the men were probably long-lost relatives. McMahon records the moment they decide to track them down. "A decision to go out on Monday to find them and 'give them trousers' is made."

A three-day chase through the bush followed. One of the members of the search party, Joseph Tjapaltjarri, was sure he recognised the footprints they were tracking - he remembered the shape of the foot from his childhood and knew it belonged to his "skin-brother", Warlimpirrnga.

Warlimpirrnga (left) with Joseph, who recognised his footsteps

McMahon was back at base camp, waiting for news. "Tomorrow we will find the two men's tracks and maybe, tonight, the last of the ancient people will spend their last night free of the modern world. However, I'm quite prepared to turn back and won't feel in any way daunted, if they stay out here as they are," he wrote in his diary.

Yukultji, a young teenager at the time, was the first to be found, together with her sister Yalti - she says it was a frightening and bewildering experience. "We had nowhere to go. My mother hid in the Spinifex. The men grab us and put us in the car, leaving Takariya's mother behind, they didn't see her in the bushes. The men took off their shirts and gave it to us."

Yalti says her senses where overwhelmed by the experience of travelling in a car for the first time. "We were frightened and we covered our faces. As the car kept moving, we looked up and the trees and Spinifex were moving around us and we kept hiding. When the car stopped I jumped off all frightened and dizzy, my head moving. It was the first time I had been in a car. I didn't know what was happening."

Warlimpirrnga tracked the car and there was a confrontation - he was the leader of the Pintupi Nine and a man of strength and determination. Armed with a spear, he was preparing to defend his family, but as he took aim his mother yelled out: "Stop that, that's your brother, your mate, leave him, that's your brother."

At this point Joseph Tjapaltjarri and Freddy West explained who they were, and the fear and tension evaporated. Warlimpirrnga could see that the men were not hurting the women and he slowly began to identify the relatives standing in front of him.

The Pintupi Nine's experience of first contact was less traumatic than it could have been. Unlike the Pintupi who had been rounded up 30 years earlier, they were met by relatives who spoke the same language, and it was a whole day before they met a white man.

The Pintupi Nine in 1984

With a hearty laugh and wide smile, Warlimpirrnga reveals what he thought when he first saw McMahon. "We were sitting down, I saw a whitefella, he was so white," he says. "'This bloke is white, this one,' I thought. 'He is white, this bloke.'"

McMahon did not want to put the group under any pressure to join the community, but he witnessed the moment they were persuaded. "It was unthinkable that they would stay out there because the modern world was so seductive. One of the fellows suggested, 'Give them a taste of the sugar and they'll be in for sure.'"

Indeed, the taste of sugar had a big impact on the Pintupi Nine and it is this aspect of their story which now animates them most. "I tasted the sugar, we didn't know what it was, but it was so sweet. I tasted the sugar and it tasted so sweet - like the Kulun Kulun flower. My mother tasted it and it was so sweet. It was good," says Warlimpirrnga.

Yukultji making moigeba - a "damper" (a kind of bread) made with black and brown seeds
The family ground seed on ancient grinding stones

Warlimpirrnga had a choice to make. If he decided to take his family into Kiwirrkurra Community, life as they had always known it would change forever. They would no longer walk from sunrise to sunset looking for water and food. "My brother Joseph, Freddy

West and I were talking. 'We're taking you with us,' they said. 'We're going to take you home where there is more food and water.' I was listening," says Warlimpirrnga. "I thought about it for a while and I said, 'Yes, take us, we've been sitting out a long time with no-one else around.'"

We've been sitting out a long time with no-one else around"

By the time the Nine reached Kiwirrkurra, new bonds had been formed. One of the search party, Freddy West, an elder of high status, had married Takariya before they even arrived - she was only a teenager at the time. "Freddy has taken one of the women as his fourth wife and everyone is amazed by how quick he was," McMahon wrote in his diary.

Aboriginal tradition has strict rules surrounding marriage. At birth you are given a skin group, which is determined by the skin groups of your parents. This determines who you are allowed to marry and is used to prevent incestuous relationships.

Warlimpirrnga does not regret deciding to leave the bush for community life. "As we came into Kiwirrkurra, I saw my nephew and niece and all the people in the community started crying when they saw us, because they knew we were family. They looked after us, they kept us, and they taught us. I got used to them. Over time I felt that I was with family together in Kiwirrkurra community and we were the same. I was happy to be with them now."

Yalti says it took a while to adjust to her new life. "We would go to the store and take flour, tin-meat and sugar. We walked out and didn't pay. We didn't know - we were bush-people. Our families would give us money and we would dig a hole and bury it. We didn't know what to do with it," she says.

The new food was also bewildering. "I cooked a potato on the campfire and it tasted good. I put an orange on the fire and it got burnt, burnt, burnt! I thought I had to move it around in the ashes, but instead the orange got really black," says Yalti.

Despite the challenges, McMahon remembers they had a terrific sense of humour. "One funny thing that happened. To do the water pipe I had to cut into the main - this was a fair amount of pressure, water spurted, everyone laughed together."

Charlie McMahon - today the didgeridoo player lives in the Blue Mountains

Adjusting to community life was not easy for all members of the family. One brother, Payirti, returned to the bush soon after arriving at Kiwirrkurra. The family does not talk about him, but other people say different things - that he is living in a different community, or that he visits Alice Springs under a different name.

McMahon has his own thoughts on why Payirti turned back. "He was in there for about two months but even when he was there he was going off on his own. He was getting away from the place... I think he couldn't handle human conflict. The strife that was happening between families and individuals that was commonplace in Kiwirrkurra - that's why he went. He just couldn't handle the stress of it and went back. I heard stories that he had gone in to the sky... mythological kind of thing," he says.

The Pintupi Nine's story underlines how young modern-day Australia is and its vastness.

The Pintupi were some of the toughest and most skilled survivors on the planet, and by passing down their survival skills from one generation to the next, they managed to occupy this part of the world, uninterrupted, for tens of thousands of years.

Takariya and a blue-tongued lizard catch

Community life is, in some ways, easier than their previous nomadic existence, but it also exposed them to nastier aspects of the modern world. When they came out of the desert they were examined by a doctor and found to be incredibly fit and healthy, without an "ounce of fat", but in the Aboriginal communities of Western Australia diabetes and obesity are rife.

McMahon remembers how quickly they succumbed to "whitefella" diseases like the common cold. Alcoholism is a problem in the Western Desert and paint- and petrol-sniffing were too, for a number of years. All have touched the Pintupi Nine siblings in one way or another.

The last nomads?

The Pintupi Nine may not have been the very last to give up a traditional life in the outback - in October 1986 a nomadic group of seven reportedly walked out of the Great Victoria Desert - it is unclear how aware they were of modern society. A government report praises them for surviving in "one of the most harsh and remote places in the world".

Warlimpirrnga, Takariya, Yalti and Yukultji still live between Kiwirrkurra and Kintore communities. Two brothers, Walala and Thomas, are both living in Alice Springs. The old ladies have passed away. All the siblings apart from Payirti are artists - Warlimpirrnga, Walala, and Thomas have gained international recognition as the Tjapaltjarri Brothers, and in 2007 Warlimpirrnga was described as "one of the greatest painters of the desert". Yukultji too has had exhibitions in Sydney and New York.

The land still holds as strong a bond for Yukultji today as it did 30 years ago, and during a trip to Lake Mackay she is delighted to come across a Minkelbar plant - a popular bush plant which acts as a mild sedative. "Lake Mackay is my country, my home, my dreamtime stories, my birthplace," she says. "This is my place, my country. I grew up around Lake Mackay. This is where I was born."

Earlier in the year, the Pintupi community signed an agreement that turned 4.2 million hectares (16,200 sq miles) of their traditional land into an Indigenous Protected Area (IPA). The Kiwirrkurra IPA is now part of the largest protected zone of arid land on Earth. "We have been looking after country for thousands of years, and we still do so today," the traditional owners declare. "We came back here because country is not healthy without us. We make it *palya* (good)."

Kiwirrkurra Community

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The Devil in the Vatican

28.12.2014

english.pravda.ru

The Devil in the Vatican. 54244.jpeg

There appears to be no limit to the demoralization and degradation of the Ukrainian nation! Along with the civil war involving massive abductions and murders, genocide using forbidden weapons, torture of innocent people and complete destruction of houses, mines and infrastructure, there has been a stunning loss of all dignity and morality!

Consider this horrendous example: Many elderly people have been left to die from hunger because their savings, pensions and supply of vital medications have been blocked.

Eighty elderly people have died recently due to the Kiev Junta's cruelty. They survived WWII just to be dispensed by their own government - a government, which has deliberately brought hell into their lives! A few survivors of WWII remembered that the Germans were less brutal than the Ukrainian National Guard's army.

There are also other shocking events reported in the villages where the Ukrainian army is lodging, including the repeated raping of teenagers by these drunken barbarians who beat their victims savagely afterwards. The nation, which claims to be a pure race, tattooed with the Nazi insignia has lost all shame!

For example, take the organization "Femen," formed in Kiev in 2008! Their website shows two postal address: Anna Hutsol 01001, Kiev-1, a/c 93-B Ukraine and

This group of bare-chested wild blondes appeared at numerous public places for the past few years, disrupting official ceremonies while demanding controversial abortion be officially recognized, legalized and written into law. They also demand that homosexuality and bestiality must accepted by the church!

Their recent so-called protest was staged on Christmas Day, December 25, 2014 at the Vatican! A topless Yana Zhdanova with black letters across her chest declaring: "God is Woman," darted across the St. Peter's Square and snatched baby Jesus from Nativity scene during the group's pro-choice demonstration. What did possess her brain to commit such a sin? This sacrilegious act was videotaped and available for the world to see. How can anyone do this on the holiest day of the year? Even non-believers respect Christmas around the globe.

What kind of drugs is she on? It's not a secret that the Ukrainian army indulge themselves in various form drug abuse. They littered Novorossyian land with syringes and empty bottles of hard liquor stolen from the locals when the army occupied the territory of the newly independent DNR and LNR regions.

Sometimes the drunken Ukrainian battalions are shelling each other! That was observed and

confirmed by the self-defense Novorossyian fighters! During the peace process signed in Minsk, the Kiev Junta didn't stop provocations. In fact they continue bringing more artillery and took strategic positions! The shelling remains daily and both sides taking losses. Officially no one reports about it in order to go along with the fragile peace game!

Donbas nevertheless celebrated the Holidays with an awe-aspiring Christmas tree, decorated in their Novorossyian flag colors! There was a concert with local dancers and singers. Children received a few treasured gifts delivered from different parts of Russia. Most donations were anonymous. The good-hearted people showed their love and support to the forsaken regions, in anticipation to collectively bring back much awaited happiness and hope!

God is with you, Novorrosyians! Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to your beautiful children, each family, your heroic self-defense warriors and to all courageous foreign correspondents who follow you to the frontline to unfold the objective views, shamelessly avoided by a mainstream media! Amen!

December 26, 2014

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The Devil's Tower - Alpine, NJ - Who Forted? Magazine

By Chris Chaos on October 20, 2014

whofortedblog.com

In August of 2012 we visited this fortress to investigate the claims made by others. But 1st a little back history on the property: In 2012, Forbes ranked Alpine as America's most expensive ZIP code with an average home price of $4.25 million, many of hip hops elite call this zip code home, along with Jay-Z, Oprah Winfrey and Chris Rock.

The Devil's Tower

The Devil's Tower is located in Rio Vista and is an upscale neighborhood in the southern section of Alpine. The Tower is a stone clock tower that is claimed to be haunted, that was originally built by sugar baron Manuel Rionda (1854–1943) in order to allow his wife to see New York from the New Jersey side of the Hudson River. His mansion was the biggest one on the Palisades, with a mansion on the cliffs where the present-day Alpine Lookout is located. The legend has it that when his wife saw him with another woman, she committed suicide by jumping off the tower. After becoming upset over his wife's death, Rionda stopped all work on the tower. In reality Harriet Rionda died of natural causes in 1922 and was interred nearby for approximately 20 years; her coffin was moved to Brookside Cemetery, Englewood. The estate was later sub-divided into 197 housing sites consisting of miles of roadway, infrastructure, and related facilities in the mid-1980s but was mostly woodlands through the 1970s.

Many legends come from the tower, legends of Satanists, marital infidelity, suicide, and conjuring ghosts. It is said that attempts to tear it down led to the deaths of some of the work crew. Another legend says that if you drive your car around the tower in reverse, the ghost of a lady appears. Also if you walk or drive around it six times backwards the devil will appear. We did this several times but nothing happened. Eventually the tower was sealed up because of break-ins.

Chris Chaos is a long time resident of South Jersey who once again resides in and writes from Gloucester City, New Jersey. He is a filmmaker, a business owner, writer, urban explorer and investigator of the odd and weird, a proud parent,

happily taken and a connoisseur of hot wings. Chris can be reached at AxisVideo@aol.com

The gate into the Devil's Tower.

Chris Chaos

tower_side

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In the low, rolling hills of southern Chatham County, south of Siler City in the woods near Harper's Crossroads, lies one of the most famous haunted places in North Carolina.

The Devil's Tramping Ground is a mysterious, perfectly round and absolutely barren circle about forty feet in diameter in the pine woods of Chatham County. Not a tree, not flower, no lowly weed, not even a single blade of grass will grow in the limits of the circle. Seed sowed there refuses to sprout. Any vegetation transplanted there will wither and die.

And, what's even more strange, any object left in the circle before dusk will have been violently moved outside its bounds by dawn.

Dogs tuck their tails between their legs and whimper when brought near, and will dig their heels into the sand, refusing to be brought into the circle.

Men have tried to spend the night in the circle, but not one has succeeded and remained sane. Something they see on their vigils drives them out of their wits, never to recover. For the Devil's Tramping Ground has earned it's name. It's said that here that the Devil himself walks at night.

In his Tramping Ground, the Devil spends his nights pacing around and around in a circle and turning his bitter mind towards ways to bring human souls to damnation. It's the scorching heat of his cloven hoofprints that kills the vegetation and has rendered the soil barren. He angrily brushes aside anything left in his path, his great strength easily able to toss aside the heaviest objects. When he walks in his private spot on earth, the devil drops the illusions with which he disguises himself when he appears to men. In his natural state the face of this fallen angel is so horrible that no man can see it and remain sane.

The mystery of the Devil's Tramping Ground has been known since Chatham County was founded shortly before the War for Independence. From generation to generation, the story has been passed down, and despite efforts by scientists to explain this barren patch of land, no satisfying explanation has ever been given.

So if you're driving on State Road 1100 in rural Chatham County at night and you pass a curve in the road where there's a narrow path leading off into the woods, if you see a shadowy figure moving between the trees it's best to drive away as fast as you can and never look back until you're long, long gone.

How to Get There

The Devil's Tramping Ground is located about ten miles south of Siler City on State Road 1100, Devil's Tramping Ground Road.

From U.S. 64 South in Siler City, take West Raleigh Road South. This turns into Siler City

Glendon Road.

Stay on this for about 10 miles until you reach Harper's Crossroads at the intersection of Siler City Glendon Road, State Highway 902, and Devil's Tramping Ground Road.

The road sign for Devil's Tramping Ground Road may be missing as it's frequently stolen, but it will be the first road on your left if you're heading south.

Go about a mile down Devil's Tramping Ground Road until you see a pull off to your right. A well-worn path will take you to the clearing, which is about twenty feet into the woods.

If you go during the summer, be aware that you need to walk through high grass to get to the Tramping Ground, and that there's a heavy proliferation of ticks in the area that apparently aren't afraid of The Devil.

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19 February, 2014 - 01:55

The enduring mystery of The Lady of Dai mummy

When talking about body preservation and mummies, people all over the world think of Egypt and the mummified bodies of Pharaohs, such as Tutankhamun. But how many know that the world's best preserved bodies actually come from China? The Lady of Dai, otherwise known as The Diva Mummy, is a 2,100-year-old mummy from the Western Han Dynasty and the best preserved ancient human ever found. Just how this incredible level of preservation was accomplished has baffled and amazed scientists around the world.

In 1971, at the height of the cold war, workers were digging an air raid shelter near the city of Changsha when they uncovered an enormous Han Dynasty-era tomb. Inside they found over 1000 perfectly preserved artefacts, along with the tomb belonging to Xin Zhui, the wife of the ruler of the Han imperial fiefdom of Dai.

Xin Zhui, the Lady of Dai, died between 178 and 145 BC, at around 50 years of age. The objects inside her tomb indicated a woman of wealth and importance, and one who enjoyed the good things in life. But it was not the precious goods and fine fabrics that immediately caught the attention of archaeologists, rather it was the extraordinarily well-preserved state of her remains that captured their eyes.

Despite the fact that she had been buried for over two millennia, her skin was still moist and elastic, her joints still flexible, every feature still remained intact down to her eyelashes and the hair in her nostrils, and blood still remained in her veins. When she was removed from the tomb, Oxygen took an immediate toll on her body and so the state in which she is seen today does not accurately reflect how she was found. Nevertheless, when forensic scientists conducted an autopsy on the Diva Mummy, they were stunned to discover that the body was in the same state as an individual who had recently died.

The Lady of Dai undergoing examination. Photo credit: Hunan Provincial Museum

The autopsy revealed that all her organs were still intact, even down to the lungs vagus (nerve), which is as thin as hair. Blood clots were found in her veins and evidence was found of a coronary heart attack, as well as a host of other ailments and diseases, such as diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, liver disease, and gallstones. The Lady Dai died of a heart attack at the age of 50, brought on by obesity, lack of exercise

and an over-indulgent diet.

When they were still studying her organs, the pathologists found 138 undigested melon seeds in her oesophagus, stomach, and intestines. Melon seeds take about 1 hour to digest so scientists were able to determine that she died shortly after eating some melons.

Archaeologists and pathologists have not determined all the factors behind her state of preservation, but they have a few clues.

A well-sealed tomb

Lady Dai was found in an airtight tomb 12 metres underground, locked inside four layers of coffins. A thick layer of white paste-like soil was on the floor. Her body had been swaddled in 20 layers of silk and she was found in 80 litres of an unknown liquid that was mildly acidic with some magnesium in it. The layers of caskets were put inside a compartment in the centre of a funnel shaped, clay lined, massive cypress, burial vault. Five tons of moisture absorbing charcoal was packed around the vault. The top was sealed with 3 feet of additional clay. Hard rammed pieces of earth filled the shaft all the way to the surface.

No substance of any kind was able to get in or out of the sealed tomb. Decay-causing bacteria trapped inside would quickly die because of the lack of oxygen. Destructive ground water could not penetrate the sturdy barriers. The result of such diligent hard work that went into sealing and protecting the late Lady Dai, was a cool, highly humid, almost sterile, environment.

The Coffin of the Second Layer

The Coffin of the Second Layer. Photo credit: Hunan Provincial Museum

Precious Valuables

Archaeologists found Lady Dai's burial chamber filled with more than 1,000 precious goods – fine fabrics, bizarre delicacies (such as caterpillar fungus), a complete wardrobe of more than 100 silk garments, 182 pieces of lacquer ware, and 162 carved wooden figurines that represented the large army of servants who would tend to her needs in the after world. The opulence found within the tomb revealed a world where the rich and powerful not only desired to live forever – they expected to.

The lacquer ware was regarded as the most precious of all manufactured goods. The collection of plates, bowls, trays, vases, basins, and toilet boxes were all part of the treasures, their deep black and bold red coating almost as perfect as the day it was buried.

A lacquered item, as lustrous as the day it was buried. Photo credit: Hunan Provincial Museum

The Lady Dai was also buried with a massive array of foods and fine cuisine stored in thirty bamboo cases and several dozen pottery containers, including: wheat, lentils, lotus roots, strawberries, pears, dates, plums, pork, venison, beef, lamb, hare, dog, goose, duck, chicken, pheasant, turtledove, sparrow, crane, fish, eggs, and owl. The common people of this time period ate nothing of the sort. Their diet had basic wheat, millet, barley, and soybeans.

A lacquered item, as lustrous as the day it was buried

China's eternal mummy

While the factor's surrounding Lady Dai's burial appear to solve the question as to how such an incredible state of preservation was achieved, scientists today have not been able to replicate it using modern methods, nor have they discovered the source of the mystery fluid found within the tomb. In fact, other tombs containing bodies similarly preserved were found within a few hundred miles of Lady Dai, but each time the liquid appeared to have different properties. Whatever the ancient morticians did, they managed to create China's eternal mummy, the Lady of Dai, who is now housed in the Hunan Provincial Museum. Visitors flock from all over the world to share in gazing at the amazing sight of a Lady Dai's well preserved body and the intriguing pieces of Chinese history she left behind.

Featured Image: The Lady of Dai. Photo Credit: Hunan Provincial Museum

By April Holloway

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The Gashadokuro

August 4, 2012Andrew Kincaid

Mitsukuni defying the Skeleton Spectre Invovked by Princess Takiyahsa (Utagawa Kuniyoshi, 1798 - 1861)

Japan is home to some very strange spirits, to say the least. Not long ago I did a post about an odd breed of spirit that exclusively haunt Japan's bathrooms. Last night I was poking around, looking for more Japanese ghouls and goblins when I came across the Gashadokuro (also known as the Odokuro).

While classified as a spirit being, it seems that much like the yurei (and contrary to the West's notion of ghosts), the Gashadokuro have a physical substance to them rather than being incorporeal. These beings manifest as gigantic skeletons, fifteen times the size of a normal man which would put them at roughly ninety feet tall. They arise from the gathered bones of people who died as a result of starvation or warfare. Due to the terrible deaths that gave them un-life, the Gashadokuro are full of anger and a blood lust that can only be sated by drinking the blood of the living.

They walk the countryside at night, seeking after human quarry. When they find an unwary traveler along the road, the Gashadokuro silently stalk them (although how a ninety foot skeleton can be stealthy is beyond me) and when the moment is right, catch their victim in a skeletal hand and proceed to bite their head off. Then the Gashadokuro sucks the body dry of blood. Imagine it as something like how we humans eat crawdads or lobsters. Pleasant, right? Japanese ghost stories are pretty hardcore.

So, how does a poor traveler avoid becoming a human crawdad? Unfortunately I've not come across any ways of combating the Gashadokuro. The only way I've seen to avoid becoming a midnight snack is to run like hell the moment you hear a strange ringing in your ears, which is the only warning the Gashadokuro gives prior to striking. Presumably then people like me who have ringing in their ears almost constantly are in a lot of trouble, then.

The Gashadokuro also walk around making a sound something like "gachi-gachi" and grinding their teeth, so presumably you could hear that as well. Plus, you know, a ninety foot skeleton is bound to stick out like a sore thumb no matter how dark it is outside. So if you find yourself broke down in Japan in the middle of the night (because that happens to all of us

at one point or another), keep your eyes peeled and your ears open and you might just survive the night.

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On the night of November 20, 1901, a young woman named Nell Cropsey disappeared from her home in Elizabeth City. Thirty-seven days later, her body was found floating in the Pasquotank River. Who killed Nell Cropsey and why has never been completely uncovered. But some say that her uneasy spirit still haunts her home in Elizabeth City.

The Cropsey family had moved to Elizabeth City in 1898 from Brooklyn, New York. Young Nell Cropsey was a beautiful woman from a wealthy family, and she soon be can attracting the attention of suitors. Nell began being courted by a local man named Jim Wilcox. At the time of her disappearance, Wilcox and Cropsey had been courting for nearly three years, and its said that Nell was growing impatient with Jim Wilcox's hesitancy to propose marriage. Nell Cropsey began flirting with other men in public in an attempt to spurn Wilcox into proposing. Instead, that evening of November 20, Cropsey and Wilcox had a huge argument. Although some of Nell's family who were in the house at the time said that she and Wilcox had tentatively made up by the end of the evening, when Cropsey steeped outside the door with Wilcox around eleven p.m. was the last time she was seen alive.

Ollie Cropsey, Nell's sister, heard something bang against the back of the house shortly after Nell and Jim Wilcox left. Going out to investigate, she found that the screen door was broken and saw no sign of Nell or Wilcox. Ollie Cropsey went upstairs to see if her sister was already in bed, but found her room empty. Shortly thereafter, a neighbor woke the entire house, yelling that someone was trying to steal the Cropsey's pig. When the family rushed downstairs, they found the front door was wide open. Jim Wilcox's umbrella, which had been a gift from Nell, was standing inside the door.

The hunt for Nell Cropsey began in earnest the next morning. The town was searched high and low, but no trace of Nell was found. Suspicion immediately fell on Jim Wilcox, who maintained that he had no idea what had happened to Nell. Wilcox was arrested on suspicion of kidnapping. The family remained in limbo until December 27th, when Mrs. Cropsey spotted something floating in the Pasquotank River near the family home. Sending some boatmen out to investigate, she crushingly realized that her long vigil was over. The boatmen had retrieved her daughter's body.

Curiously, a few days earlier the family had received a letter with a New York postmark laying out what seemed to be a detailed account of the events of the night of Nell's disappearance. The letter stated that Nell Cropsey had discovered a vagrant attempting to steal the family pig. Upon being discovered, the man grabbed a heavy stick and knocked Nell unconscious, carrying her off and tearing a nearby boat. He rowed out into the river and dumped Nell Cropsey in the Pasquotank. The letter included a map which marked the spot where the body could be found. The spot marked on the map was very close to where Nell Cropsey's body was eventually discovered.

With the discovery of Cropsey's body, the town went mad. A lynch mob descended on the jail,

demanding Wilcox be released into their hands. Nell's parents refused to join the mob, and pleaded with the crowd to let justice be served in the courts. Eventually, Governor Aycock sent in a small naval reserve group to disperse the crowd.

Wilcox was tried twice for Cropsey's murder. The fitrst guilty conviction was overturned when the NC Supreme Court declared a mistrial. A second trial convicted Wilcox on a charge of second degree murder an sentenced him to thirty years in prison. At neither trial did Wilcox take the stand in his own defense.

Wilcox was pardoned by Governor Thomas Bickett in 1920. To the end of his life, Wilcox maintained his innocence.

Shortly before his death in 1932, Wilcox spoke with W.O. Saunders, the editor of the Elizabeth City newspaper, and revealed everything he knew about the murder. Saunders walked away from the interview convinced Wilcox was innocent, and planned to publish the full details. Two weeks after that interview, Jim Wilcox committed suicide. Saunders died shortly thereafter in car accident. Whaever Wilcox had told Saunders would now never be heard.

For the past century, those who have lived in the Cropsey home have reported strange happenings. Lights have gone on and off by themselves, doors open and shut of their own accord, and storage gusts of cold air move through the house.

The pale figure of a young woman has also been seen moving through the house. Many people passing by on the street outside have reported seeing the ghostly figure of a girl looking out of an upstairs window. Residents say that the figure of Nell Cropsey has even appeared in their bedrooms at night.

Is the unfortunate victim of one of North Carolina's most famous and sensational murder cases still wandering through her home in Elizabeth city? Will the true facts around Nell Cropsey's murder ever be known? This enduring mystery has become part of the living history of Elizabeth City, and no visit to this quiet coastal town is complete without a walk by the Cropsey home.

How to Get There

The Cropsey Home is located at 1901 Riverside Drive in Eliazbeth City. This home is a private residence, but is occasionally open to the public on special occasions, including the annual Elizabeth City ghost walk.

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The Glozel Controversy – Amazing Historical Discovery or Elaborate Hoax?

ancient-origins.net

Emile Fradin and the artifacts found at Glozel, with sketches of pottery

24 December, 2014 - 12:18mrreese

The Glozel Controversy – Amazing Historical Discovery or Elaborate Hoax?

The discovery of a cavern filled with artifacts in Glozel, France in 1924 was an astonishing find. Initially brought to light by a farmer plowing his fields, the cavern yielded more than 3,000 artifacts over the course of 6 years. The artifacts quickly became a great source of controversy when experts began to debate their authenticity. To this day, the Glozel artifacts are still controversial, as there has never been a universal acceptance as to whether they are authentic.

The discovery of the Glozel artifacts was completely unintentional. They were not discovered by scientists conducting an excavation or as a part of any planned recovery. Rather, the discovery came from very modest means. On March 1, 1924, 17-year-old Émile Fradin was plowing a field on his farm with a cow-drawn plow. As he was plowing, the cow's foot got stuck in the ground. As Fradin tried to free the cow's foot, he discovered an underground chamber. Within the chamber were human bones and ceramic pieces. The walls were made of clay bricks, and the floor was tiled. The young man realized that he had found something significant, worthy of a scholarly review.

Detail, Artifacts from the Glozel chamber. France, 1920s.

Detail, Artifacts from the Glozel chamber. France, 1920s. Public Domain

The first academics to view the chamber were Adrienne Picandet, a local teacher, and Benoit Clément, from the Société d'Émulation du Bourbonnais. Clement and a man named Viple later returned to the site with a pickaxe. They removed the chamber walls and took them with them. Sometime

later, Viple contacted Fradin and informed him that the chamber was a Gallo-Roma site dating back to 100-400 A.D. Viple indicated that the site may be of some archaeological importance. A museum was created to hold the artifacts.

Young Émile Fradin inside his museum at Glozel. Allier, France. 1920s. Public Domain

Artifacts in the Glozel museum. 1920s. Public Domain

Young Emile Fradin inside his museum at Glozel. Allier, France. 1920s

Artifacts in the Glozel museum. 1920s.

Word of the discovery of the chamber soon spread, thanks to a publication in the *Bulletin de la Société d'Émulation du Bourbonnais*. As word spread, more researchers were drawn to the Fradin farm. Physician and amateur archaeologist Antonin Morlet visited the site. He offered 200 francs to be permitted to excavate the site. Excavations began on May 24, 1925, with Morlet eventually uncovering a variety of artifacts including inscripted tablets, bones, engraved stones, and flint tools. After completing his excavations, Morlet identified the items as dating back to the Neolithic period, from 10,200 B.C. until 2,000 B.C. Morlet's findings were published in an article titled *Nouvelle Station Néolithique*, of which Fradin was listed as a co-author. Clearly, Morlet's dating of the chamber and artifacts extended much further back than Viple's dating. But dating of the Glozel artifacts proved not to be the only issue in contention, as there were some who doubted the legitimacy of the site as a whole.

Doubts about the authenticity of the Glozel find began upon the publication of Morlet's report. Having been authored by Morlet, an amateur archaeologist, and Fradin, a peasant farmer, French archaeological academia skeptically dismissed the report. Further excavations of the site ensued. The curator of the National Museum of Saint-Germain-en-Laye at the time, Salomon Reinach, conducted a 3-day excavation. He concluded that the site was authentic in a writing published in the *Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*. Another famous archaeologist, Abbé Breuil, excavated the site with Morlet. While Breuil was impressed with the site, he ultimately concluded that "everything is false except the stoneware pottery."

Excavation at Glozel. 1920s. Public Domain

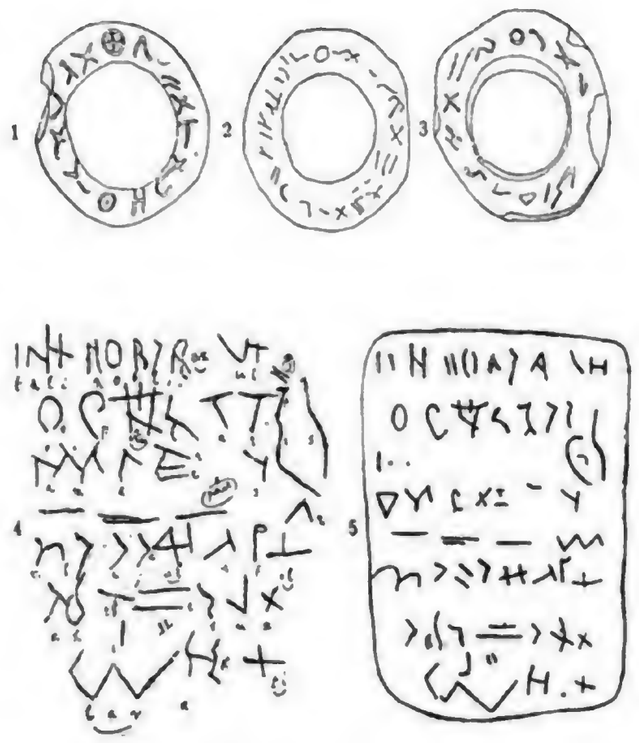
With such opposing conclusions being drawn as to the dating and authenticity of the Glozel artifacts, the topic quickly became very controversial. The International Institute of Anthropology in Amsterdam held a meeting in September 1927 where the Glozel controversy was a hot topic of discussion and debate. The Glozel artifacts could have represented a major historical find that might provide insight into ancient human cultures, or it could have been merely a hoax. It was important to determine the truth to preserve the accuracy of the

Excavation at Glozel. 1920s.

modern world's interpretations of human history. Ultimately, a commission was chosen to further investigate Glozel. On November 5, 1927, they began a 3-day excavation. By this point, spectators were visiting the site in large numbers, curious as to what secrets would be uncovered and what discoveries would be made. The interest of the spectators was further fueled as the commission found new artifacts during excavation. However, the final conclusion of the commission was that almost everything found at Glozel was a fake. Only a few flint axes and pieces of stone were declared to be authentic.

Stone or clay tablets and other artifacts in the Glozer museum. 1920s.

Stone or clay tablets and other artifacts in the Glozer museum. 1920s. Public Domain



Sketches of inscriptions on the Glozel tablets and artifacts.

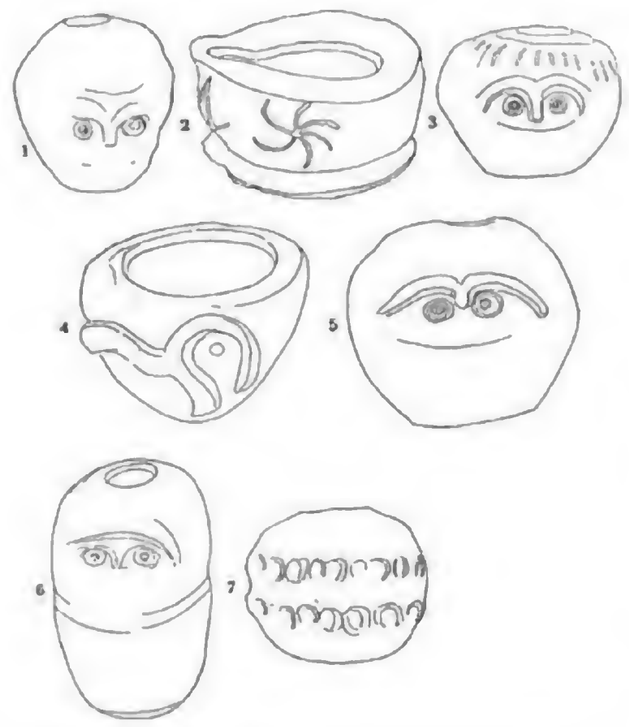
Sketches of inscriptions on the Glozel tablets and artifacts. Public Domain

Legal battles began to arise at this point. Fradin was accused of forgery by René Dussaud, curator at the Louvre. Fradin filed a defamation lawsuit against Dussaud, adding further fuel to the ongoing controversy. Glozel was visited again in February 1928, this time by Felix Regnault, who was serving as the president of the French Prehistoric Society at the time. Regnault filed a fraud claim against Fradin. At Regnault's direction, police raided the Glozel museum, where artifacts had been on display. They confiscated three cases of artifacts.

In hopes of settling the growing disputes, a new set of archaeologists, known as the Committee of Studies, was appointed to conduct another excavation at Glozel. After working for two days in April 1928, the Committee found several additional artifacts. They ultimately concluded that the site was authentic, and that it dated back to the Neolithic period, just as Morlet had concluded.

Sketches of pottery found at Glozel. Public Domain

Since the 1920s, controversy as to the authenticity of the Glozel site has remained. Studies of



Sketches of pottery found at Glozel.

the area slowed as private excavations were outlawed from 1941 through 1983. The site was re-excavated in 1983, but the full report for that excavation was never released. In 1995, a 13-page summary was published, in which the site and some of the artifacts were estimated to date back to medieval times, at approximately 500-1,500 A.D., but that it was likely that many of the artifacts found were forgeries. The controversy and curiosity continues to this day, as modern testing has allowed for a more accurate dating of some of the pieces. This advanced testing has shown that many Glozel artifacts are, in fact, authentic. However, the overall authenticity of the site is still in question. A group of scholars holds an annual colloquium about Glozel in hopes of one day determining the authenticity of the site and artifacts for once and for all. However, one key player in the controversy will no longer provide any insights, as Fradin passed away in 2010, at age 103. If he held any remaining secrets as to the site's authenticity, he took those to the grave with him. For now, it is still not entirely certain if the Glozel site is an amazing historical find, or an elaborate hoax.

Featured image: Emile Fradin and the artifacts found at Glozel, with sketches of pottery. Derivative, Public Domain

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By M R Reese

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Sure, maybe your world didn't end…

It's frankly surprising how often the world ends. Perhaps not your world, but certainly somebody's. Modern minds tend to view millennial and apocalyptic warnings with a measure of disdain. Armageddon was scheduled in 634 B.C. (popular opinion was that Rome was to be destroyed 120 years after its founding), 500 A.D. (Jesus was supposed to return based on calculated dimensions of the Ark), 1000 A.D. (predicted by Pope Sylvester II), 1600 A.D. (Martin Luther), 1910 A.D. (the return of Halley's Comet), 2012 A.D. (end of the Mayan Long Count), and innumerable calendar dates in between, yet the world has merrily kept chugging along. Well, our world at least. Thus, with a self-satisfied smirk at our own modernity, each new prognostication of doom can be summarily dismissed as another in a long line of dates that come and go uneventfully, merging comfortably into what we call history, our seamless narrative that eternally serves to assure us that this too shall pass. What we fail to notice when each apocalypse expires with a whimper, and fails to even substantially interrupt our traditional amusements or TV viewing schedule, is that from someone's perspective, the world as they knew it, did indeed end. With the death of Tecumseh, the world of the Shawnee Native Americans irrevocably vanished amid signs and portents, signaling the death of a mode of existence, an apocalypse writ small in our teleological frame of reference, yet looming large to those who could only watch as the familiar universe crumbled to dust.

Scholars have suggested that the Algonquin-speaking Shawnee were likely the descendants of the pre-contact "Fort Ancient Culture" that flourished in the Ohio region between 1000-1650 A.D, which in turn was probably related to the earlier mound-building Hopewell Culture that thrived between 200 B.C.-500 A.D. from what is now the Southeastern United States to the southern shores of Lake Ontario. By the time Europeans began snapping up choice real estate east of the Mississippi River, the Shawnee were semi-migratory, periodically moving through lands in Ohio, Virginia, West Virginia, Western Maryland, Alabama, South Carolina, Kentucky, Illinois, Indiana, and Pennsylvania. By the 1830's the Shawnee were pushed west of the Mississippi and into the "Indian Territory" of what would one day be Oklahoma. The mid-17th Century Beaver Wars, pitting the Dutch, English, and Iroquois Confederation against the French and loosely aligned Algonquin-speaking tribes (of which the Shawnee were one) of the Great Lakes region, led to a steady push of the Shawnee west and south, fleeing the rapidly expanding Iroquois. The Iroqouis claimed Shawnee territories in the Ohio Valley as their own, reducing the Shawnee to a dependency of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy (the name taken up by the Five Nations of the Iroquois). The Haudenosaunee Confederacy signed the Treaty of Fort Stanwix in 1768 with the British colonists, marking the Ohio River as the boundary of English possessions over the objections of the Shawnee who actually lived there, and Virginia more or less proceeded to launch an invasion of the Ohio Territory, after violence between the settlers and local Shawnee erupted. With the Treaty of Camp Charlotte in 1774, Shawnee Chief Cornstalk was forced to accept the terms of the earlier Treaty of Fort Stanwix. Things went from bad to worse when the American Revolution amped up. The various Shawnee tribes were divided on whether to support the British, the Colonials, or remain neutral. The Shawnee joined with the Miami in the war that ensued against the United States following the revolution, but after the 1794 defeat at the Battle of Fallen Timbers, large parts of the Ohio Territory were given up, and many of the Shawnee tribes fled into Indiana and Missouri. Into this world of endemic warfare, Tecumseh (1768-1813) was born, fighting in both the American Revolution and the subsequent Northwest Indian War (1785-1795).

Tecumseh envisioned a native confederacy east of the Mississippi that could resist the expansion of the United States, and spent a good portion of his life recruiting other tribes to his cause, along with his brother, the Shawnee religious leader and prophet Tenskwatawa. Tenskwatawa urged a return to traditional Shawnee ways, rejecting firearms, alcohol, European-style clothing, and giving up any further lands to settlers, prophesizing a coming apocalypse that would destroy the colonists based on earlier teachings of the Lenape prophets Scattamek and Neolin (who both spearheaded traditionalist revivals). From a multi-tribal community centered on Prophetstown (modern day Tippecanoe, Indiana), the brothers led the resistance and temporarily impeded European expansion westward as more tribes flocked to the teachings of Tenskwatawa and the leadership of Tecumseh. In 1809, Indiana Territorial Governor William Henry Harrison convinced a delegation of tribal leaders to give up some three million acres of land, strongly opposed by Tecumseh, who redoubled his efforts to solidify a native confederacy and resist the incursion of settlers. In his recruitment drives in preparation to side with the British in the War of 1812, Tecumseh gave the following speech to the Muscogee tribe at Tuckaubatchee in 1811.

In defiance of the white warriors of Ohio and Kentucky, I have traveled through their settlements, once our favorite hunting grounds. No war-whoop was sounded, but there is blood on our knives. The Pale-faces felt the blow, but knew not whence it came. Accursed be the race that has seized on our country and made women of our warriors. Our fathers, from their tombs, reproach us as slaves and cowards. I hear them now in the wailing winds. The Muscogee was once a mighty people. The Georgians trembled at your war-whoop, and the maidens of my tribe, on the distant lakes, sung the prowess of your warriors and sighed for their embraces. Now your very blood is white; your tomahawks have no edge; your bows and arrows were buried with your fathers. Oh! Muscogees, brethren of my mother, brush from your eyelids the sleep of slavery; once more strike for vengeance; once more for your country. The spirits of the mighty dead complain. Their tears drop from the weeping skies. Let the white race perish. They seize your land; they corrupt your women; they trample on the ashes of your dead! Back, whence they came, upon a trail of blood, they must be driven. Back! back, ay, into the great water whose accursed waves brought them to our shores! Burn their dwellings! Destroy their stock! Slay their wives and children! The Red Man owns the country, and the Pale-faces must never enjoy it. War now! War forever! War upon the living! War upon the dead! Dig their very corpses from the grave. Our country must give no rest to a white man's bones. This is the will of the Great Spirit, revealed to my brother, his familiar, the Prophet of the Lakes. He sends me to you. All the tribes of the north are dancing the war-dance. Two mighty warriors across the seas will send us arms. Tecumseh will soon return to his country. My prophets shall tarry with you. They will stand between you and the bullets of your enemies. When the white men approach you the yawning earth shall swallow them up. Soon shall you see my arm of fire stretched athwart the sky. I will stamp my foot at Tippecanoe, and the very earth shall shake (Claiborne, 1860, p59).

While Tecumseh was away from Prophetstown in November 1811 spreading the word, Harrison and Tenskwatawa clashed at the Battle of Tippecanoe, forcing Tenskwatawa's retreat and the burning of the village. Tecumseh, unable to convince the Muskogee of Alabama to join him gave a stern warning before he hurried to Detroit to aid British Major-General Sir Isaac Brock in forcing the city's surrender as the War of 1812 got underway.

Your blood is white. You have taken my talk, and the sticks, and the wampum, and the hatchet, but you do not mean to fight I know the reason. You do not believe the Great Spirit has sent me. You shall know. I leave Tuckabatchee directly and shall go straight to Detroit; when I arrive there, I will stamp on the ground with my foot, and shake down all the houses in Tuckabatchee (Eggleston, 1878, 209-210).

Apparently, the Great Spirit was listening. Roughly the same time that Tecumseh arrived in Detroit, around December 16th, 1811, the first of the New Madrid earthquakes struck with an epicenter in Northeast Arkansas, felt across more than 3 million square kilometers. The New Madrid quakes were thought to have been at least a 7 on the Richter scale and the most powerful earthquakes in the eastern

U.S. in recorded history. Needless to say, at least some of the Muskogee took that as a sign and headed off to join Tecumseh. Tecumseh was killed in the 1813 Battle of the Thames in Ontario, and the native coalition he had formed did not survive him. The rapidly dwindling Shawnee were pushed out, forcibly relocated, and driven to Oklahoma and Kansas. Today there only roughly 7000 Shawnee left, primarily residing in Oklahoma, of a people who once roamed from Canada to Georgia, probable descendants of inhabitants who had occupied the land for at least 1600 years. The world as they knew it truly ended for the Shawnee in 1813. The final battle of the apocalypse came and went, jotted down as a historical footnote as "Tecumseh's War".

Next time you are faced with someone else's millennial expectations or predictions of an impending Armageddon, while you can rest easier knowing that you'll probably still be around doing the same old thing when the terrible deadline passes without remark, the odds are that some unfortunate's reality just imploded while you were making dinner. Perhaps this is why it sometimes seems as if we crave the end of the world. We see our norms, beliefs, convictions, and those cherished things we cling to and once gave order to our lives changing from one generation to the next. Stuck as we are in our comfortable patterns of thought, we read these as oracles of the end times, and wonder how the world could possibly go on without us. As G.K. Chesterton observed, "If we could destroy custom at a blow and see the stars as a child sees them, we should need no other apocalypse".

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The Green Children of Woolpit

21 November, 2014 - 12:41

The Green Children of Woolpit: the 12th century legend of visitors from another world

The Children of Woolpit is an ancient account dating back to the 12th century, which tells of two children that appeared on the edge of a field in the village of Woolpit in England. The young girl and boy had green-hued skin and spoke an unknown language. The children became sick and the boy died, but the girl recovered and over the years came to learn English. She later relayed the story of their origins, saying they came from a place called St Martin's Land, which existed in an atmosphere of permanent twilight, and where the people lived underground. While some view the story as a folk tale that that describes an imaginary encounter with inhabitants of another world beneath our feet or even extraterrestrial, others accept it as a real, but somewhat altered account of a historical event that merits further investigation.

The account is set in the village of Woolpit located in Suffolk, East Anglia. In the Middle Ages, it lay within the most agriculturally productive and densely populated area of rural England. The village had belonged to the rich and powerful Abbey of Bury St. Edmunds.

The ruins of the Abbey of Bury St. Edmunds

The ruins of the Abbey of Bury St. Edmunds (Wikipedia)

The story was recorded by two 12th century chroniclers - Ralph of Coggestall (died c 1228 AD), an abbot of a Cistercian monastery at Coggeshall (about 26 miles / 42 km south of Woolpit), who recorded his account of the green children in the Chronicon Anglicanum (English Chronicle); and William of Newburgh (1136-1198 AD), an English historian and canon at the Augustinian Newburgh Priory, far to the north in Yorkshire, who includes the story of the green children in his main work Historia rerum Anglicarum (History of English Affairs). The writers stated that the events

took place within the reign of King Stephen (1135-54) or King Henry II (1154-1189), depending on which version of the story you read.

The Story of the Green Children

According to the account of the green children, a boy and his sister were found by reapers working their fields at harvest time near some ditches that had been excavated to trap wolves at St Mary's of the Wolf Pits (Woolpit). Their skin was tinged with a green hue, their clothes were made from unfamiliar materials, and their speech was unintelligible to the reapers. They were taken to the village, where they were eventually accepted into the home of local landowner, Sir Richard de Caine at Wilkes.

The children would not eat any food presented to them but appeared starving. Eventually, the villagers brought round recently harvested beans, which the children devoured. They survived only on beans for many months until they acquired a taste for bread.

The boy became sick and soon succumbed to illness and died, while the girl remained in good health and eventually lost her green-tinged skin. She learned how to speak English and was later married to a man at King's Lynn, in the neighboring county of Norfolk. According to some accounts, she took the name 'Agnes Barre' and the man she married was an ambassador of Henry II, although these details have not been verified. After she learned how to speak English, she relayed the story of their origins.

Artist's depiction of the Green Children of Woolpit

Artist's depiction of the Green Children of Woolpit (Image source)

A Strange Underground Land

The girl reported that she and her brother came from the "Land of Saint Martin", where there was no sun, but a perpetual twilight, and all the inhabitants were green like them. She described another 'luminous' land that could be seen across a river.

She and her brother were looking after their father's flock, when they came upon a cave. They entered the cave and wandered through the darkness for a long time until they came out the other side, entering into bright sunlight, which they found startling. It was then that they were found by the reapers.

Explanations

Over the centuries, many theories have been put forward to explain this strange account. Regarding their green colouring, one proposal is that the children were suffering from Hypochromic Anemia, originally known as Chlorosis (coming from the Greek word 'Chloris', meaning greenish-yellow). The condition is caused by a very poor diet that affects the color of the red blood cells and results in a noticeably green shade of the skin. In support of this

theory is the fact that the girl is described as returning to a normal color after adopting a healthy diet.

With regards to the description of the strange land, Paul Harris suggested in Fortean Studies 4 (1998) that the children were Flemish orphans, possibly from a nearby place known as Fornham St. Martin, which was separated from Woolpit by the River Lark. A lot of Flemish immigrants had arrived during the 12th century but were persecuted under the reign of King Henry II. In 1173, many were killed near Bury St Edmunds. If they had fled into Thetford Forest, it may have seemed like permanent twilight to the frightened children. They may also have entered one of the many underground mine passages in the area, which finally led them to Woolpit. Dressed in strange Flemish clothes and speaking another language, the children would have presented a very strange spectacle to the Woolpit villagers.

Other commentators have suggested a more 'other-worldly' origin for the children. Robert Burton suggested in his 1621 book 'The Anatomy of Melancholy' that the green children "fell from Heaven", leading others to speculate that the children may have been extraterrestrials. In a 1996 article published in the magazine Analog, astronomer Duncan Lunan hypothesised that the children were accidentally transported to Woolpit from their home planet, which may be trapped in synchronous orbit around its sun, presenting the conditions for life only in a narrow twilight zone between a fiercely hot surface and a frozen dark side.

The story of the green children has endured for over eight centuries since the first recorded accounts. While the real facts behind the story may never be known, it has provided the inspiration for numerous poems, novels, operas, and plays across the world, and continues to capture the imagination of many curious minds.

Featured image: A village *sign in Woolpit, England, depicting the two green children of the 12th century legend (Wikimedia)*

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By April Holloway

Hurricanes are a fact of life on the Carolina Coast. Every few years, one of these tremendous storms is going to blow in from the Atlantic, flood the coast, do tremendous damage, and then move on. But while the storm is there it's certain that homes will be lost, and terribly likely that people will die.

No point in the state is more vulnerable to hurricanes than Cape Hatteras. Hatteras sits right on the edge of the gulf stream, the massive flow of warm water that circles through the Atlantic. This current is powerful enough to have given the island its distinctive, pointed shape, and also powerful enough to tell even a hurricane where to go. If one of these storms comes anywhere near the Carolina coast, there's a good chance that it will hit Cape Hatteras.

But there's something on Cape Hatteras that lets the islanders know when a storm is coming.

The Grey Man of Hatteras is an indistinct, shadowy figure who walks the beaches of Cape Hatteras as a hurricane is approaching. He appears as the first winds of the storm touch the island whenever a hurricane is a real threat to the island and it's inhabitants.

He never speaks, or at least no one has ever heard him speak. No one has ever gotten close enough. If anyone approaches the Grey Man, his form slowly fades into the salty air until he's completely gone by the time the curious onlooker reaches where he was standing.

But his presence alone is enough to warn the islanders. If he's seen on a beach, it's a sure way to know that the oncoming storm will be a bad one. He's a warning that nature is still something to be taken seriously.

Who is the Grey Man? Some people say that he's the ghost of a sailor from the island who died at sea in a hurricane. They say that he comes back to warn his fellow islanders of the danger, because his soul was so terrorized by his windy, watery end that he can't bear to go on from this world while he can still prevent others from sharing his fate.

Some others will tell you that he never was a man, that he's just a force of nature. That he's not so much a ghost as a spirit, an expression of the force behind the moving wind and waves pushing the entire sea in front itself as it moves towards the vulnerable island. Even in today's world, where we can watch the storms form from space and fly airplanes into the storm to measure the winds, we still give each hurricane a name when it's born, because we still think that anything so powerful and so willful must be alive. Maybe the grey Man is just the hurricane itself talking to us, all that power and force born out of the deep ocean reaching out to the land. Maybe the grey Man is just the only way we have to see that expression of force, when our tiny little human minds encounter something much more powerful that we can ever fully understand.

Whoever he was, whatever he is, the grey Man of Hatteras still walks the beaches under the shadow of the tallest lighthouse whenever a hurricane is heading towards the island. Even as Cape Hatteras has gone from being a lonely little island to a crowded tourist beach, the grey Man still warns us of the coming storm.

So if you're ever on Hatteras and you turn in the TV and they're talking about a storm, stroll down to the cloud-covered beach and look our towards the waves as the first few drops of rain begin to fall. Look for a shadowy figure, prowling the beach where the high waves hit the sand.

And if you see him, pack up and get off the island as quick as you can. This storm is going to be a big one.

October 21, 2012Andrew Kincaid

An alleged photo of the Hibagon. Dunno about you, but I'm not seeing it…

If locals are to be believed, something strange stalks the hills and mountains of Hiroshima Prefecture. Reports have come in sporadically since the 1970's of a five foot tall, hairy, gorilla like creature out in the forest. Japanese Boy Scouts have taken casts of ten inch footprints, and multiple witnesses have reported a creature with chocolate brown or black hair, white hands and feet, and a gorilla like face. They also report a strong odor, like decomposing meat. Locals call this monster the Hibagon.

Sound familiar? To my fellow Americans, this is starting to sound suspiciously like that oft sighted but never verified critter, Bigfoot. It shouldn't be a surprise that Japan would have its own version of Bigfoot though, as reports of hairy wild men are common to all parts of the world. Unlike other parts of the world (say, North America for instance), Japan does have a history of non-human primate populations. Monkeys are native to Japan. However, so far as I am aware the only large ape who has lived on the islands for any length of time are humans. Since there are no fossil data pointing to populations of large bodied primates on Japan, it seems doubtful that one would be living there now.

So what could explain the sightings? The hypotheses seem as varied as the witnesses. Some claim the Hibagon is some sort of wild man, while others claim that Japanese soldiers who still believe WWII is still ongoing are responsible. The next guess steps into sci-fi territory. As you probably well know, Hiroshima is infamous for being the first city to be on the receiving end of a nuclear attack. Some claim that the Hibagon is a person who was mutated by the radiation from that attack. I can say with utter certainty that is not the case. The Hibagon, based on descriptions, differs too much from humans to be a mutated human population. Besides, that isn't how evolution works. The mutations caused by nuclear radiation have more immediate effects, namely cancer, that manifest in the person's lifetime. While mutation is an important factor in evolutionary processes, the changes in the genome are gradual and only accumulate over many generations. Even if radiation could effect human evolution in such a way, it wouldn't do so over such a short period of time.

I seriously doubt that the Hibagon is anything more than folklore. More likely than not it reports are based on mis-identification of a native specie, such as a bear. Or it's possible that an ape, maybe a chimp or a small gorilla, escaped from a zoo in the 70's and sparked the legend. Regardless of it's biological status, the Hibagon has a life all its own in Japanese pop culture. It's likeness has appeared on snacks, books, anime, and manga. In that way the Hibagon is very real, if only in a cultural sense.

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Natural History, January-February 1925

The Hoop Snake Story
With Some Theories Of Its Origin

By Karl Patterson Schmidt
Assistant Curator of reptiles and Amphibians,
Field Museum of Natural History

ONE of the most persistent and widespread snake myths in the United States tells of a large serpent which takes its tail in its mouth and rolls like a hoop. It is further reputed to have a poisonous sting in its tail, which is launched at its enemy from the rolling position. This story has come to be associated with various snakes in different parts of the country. My interest in the story was aroused during a stay in Louisiana, where I could gather eyewitness testimony regarding one of the "hoop snakes" (*Abastor erythrogrammus*) and the "stingin' snake" of the genus *Faranda*. It appears that the supposed habit of rolling like a hoop is an elaboration of the more fundamental belief in a snake with a poison sting in its tail.

Herodotus, the earliest source of some still current misinformation concerning reptiles, is not the fountainhead of this legend, and it does not find place in Pliny, whose voluminous Natural History would surely have included a story so much in his own vein, had he known of it.

My first impression was that this must be one of the universal snake myths, and I thought of the familiar "snake" bracelet or finger ring, in which the head of the snake meets the tail. On inquiry, however, there appears to be no classical or European analogue of the American hoop snake story. (The Midgard serpent of Norse myth, a sea monster represented as encircling the earth, could not, in the opinion of the writer, have had a bearing on the hoop snake story.) Herodotus, the earliest source of some still current misinformation concerning reptiles, is not the fountainhead of this legend, and it does not find place in Pliny, whose voluminous Natural History would surely have included a story so much in his own vein, had he known of it. My search of possible European sources was slight, but it gave no clue to a European prototype of the hoop snake yarn.

Turning to American sources, our search is at once rewarded by finding references to the horn or hoop snake in early accounts of travel in this country. (For a list of volumes which were searched for mention of the hoop snake, I am indebted to Dr. A. H. Wright of Cornell University.) These accounts may speak for themselves. The earliest is in a letter dated 1688 that was written by John Clayton to the Royal Society of London (Force,

P., *Tracts relating to America*, Vol. III, No. 12, p. 44. Washington, 1844):

"There is another sort of deadly snake, the Red-Snake; I once narrowly escaped treading on the back of one of them. They are of an ugly dark brown Colour, inclining to red; their bellies are of a more dusky white, with a large streak of vermilion Red on either side; this too is of the Viper kind, but is not so short, but its tail is more taper and small. The Horn snake, is as they say, another sort of deadly snake; I never saw any of them unless once, shortly after my Arrival in that Country, which I cannot attest to being the Horn-Snake, for I could not distinctly view it, being in a thicket of sumach; it was perched up about two feet high in a Sumach Branch, its Tail twisted about the Shrub, and about a quarter of a yard stood bolt forward, leaning over the forked branch thereof: I could not see the Horne, with which it strikes, and if it wounds, is as deadly as the Rattle-Snake's Bite. The Gentleman that was with me told me it was the Horn snake; but being in hast, and on Horseback, and the Snake in a Thicket, I could not see the Horn; but had I thought I should never have seen more of them, I should have took a little Pains to have been better satisfied. This I think may not improperly be referred to the Dart Snake."

Here are a number of elements that go to make up a typical snake story. A description of the mud or rainbow snake (it is impossible to be sure which is meant); a "horn snake," with the horn in its "front," apparently one of the tree snakes, or possibly a black snake; and not least, the abundant excuses for not making a more thorough investigation.

"They have likewise the Horn snake, so called from a sharp horn it carries in its tail, with which it assaults anything that offends it, with that Force, that as it is said it will strike its tail into the But end of a Musquet, from whence it is not able to disengage itself."

The next account is that of Robert Beverly, in a History of Virginia published in London in 1722 (p. 261). He writes: "They have likewise the Horn snake, so called from a sharp horn it carries in its tail, with which it assaults anything that offends it, with that Force, that as it is said it will strike its tail into the But end of a Musquet, from whence it is not able to disengage itself."

In this short note are two distinct additions that are familiar in later accounts: first, the transference of the horn to the tail; and second, the characteristic of striking with such force as to remain fast in the object struck. No mention is made of the horn being poisonous,—an oversight which is supplied by our next reference.

Alexander Hewatt, writing in 1779 (*Historical Account of South Carolina and Georgia*, Vol. I, p. 87. London), describes the fangs of the rattler and other genuinely poisonous snakes; he then goes on to say: "The horn snake is also found here, which takes his name from a horn in its tail, with which he defends himself, and strikes it with great force into every aggressor. This reptile is also deemed very venomous, and the Indians, when wounded by him usually cut out the

"He throws himself into a circle, running rapidly around, advancing like a hoop, with his tail arising and pointed forward in the circle, by which he is always in the ready position of striking."

part wounded as quickly as possible so as to prevent the infection spreading through the body."

In this account the name of "Horn snake" is reënforced, and the quality of venom added. This is the only reference to a belief in stinging snakes on the part of the North American Indians which has come to my attention. It would be highly interesting if these legends should be found in North American Indian folklore, and in that case my hypothesis, subsequently stated, of an African origin could be discarded.

The next account in our list is supplied by one J. F. D. Smyth, in 1784 (*Tour in the U. S. A.*, Vol. I, p. 263-65. London). As this is the first account—I had almost said authentic account—which introduces the "hoop," I shall quote it in full. Referring to a stay in western North Carolina, he writes:

"While I was at Sawra Towns, one day a little lad of Mr. Bayley's came to acquaint us that he had killed a horn-snake, which being a curiosity that I was extremely desirous of observing and examining with particular attention, I accompanied him to the place where he said he had left it; but when we arrived there, to my great disappointment, it was not to be found. He assured me that it must not have been quite dead, and had recovered so much as to be able to crawl from the spot on which he had left it, and had secreted itself somewhere among the leaves.

> "However, everyone, and all the inhabitants, with the greatest confidence asserted, and avowed their having seen such snake, though very seldom.
>
> "They represented them to me as the most formidable and direful foes in existence to the human race, and to all animation; poisonous and fatal to a degree almost beyond credibility.
>
> "He is described as something resembling a black snake, but thicker, shorter, and of a colour more inclining to dark brown. He never bites his adversary, but has a weapon in his tail, called his sting, of a hard horny substance, in shape and appearance very much like to a cock's spur: with this he strikes his antagonist, or whatever object he aims at, when he least expects it, and if it penetrates the skin it is inevitable and sudden death.
>
> "So very virulent is his poison that it is reported, if he should miss the object he pointed at, and should strike his horn through the bark of a young sapling tree, if it penetrates into the sap or vital parts, the bark or rind will, within a few hours, swell, burst, and peel off, and the tree itself will perish. (What may be an indirect reference to the account of Mr. Smyth appears in *Charles M. Walker's A History of Athens Co., Ohio*, p. 97, Cincinnati, 1869: "Early travellers mention the hoop snake, stinging with their tails. and so malignant as to cause the death of a green tree if struck.")

"As other serpents crawl upon their bellies, so can this; but he has another method of moving peculiar to his own species, which he always adopts when he is in eager pursuit of his prey; he throws himself into a circle, running rapidly around, advancing like a hoop, with his tail arising and pointed forward in the circle, by which he is always in the ready position of striking.

"It is observed that they only make use of this method in attacking; for when they fly from their enemy they go upon their bellies, like other serpents.

"From the above circumstance, peculiar to themselves, they have also derived the appellation of hoop snakes."

This account may be considered the first in which the hoop snake myth appears in full flower. It is to be noted that the hoop snake story is added to that of the horn snake. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that some village genius has invented the hoop snake and blended his creation with the horn snake, the reputation of whose venomous tail sting was a really current snake "myth."

In a *View of South Carolina*, by John Drayton, published in Charleston in 1802, appears a list of the snakes of South Carolina that includes the horn snake. Robert Mills, in *Statistics of South Carolina*, 1826 (p. 102. Charleston), also mentions a species under this name.

John Lee Williams, in a *View of West Florida*, published in 1827 (p. 28. Philadelphia), lists various snakes and writes that " . . . a livid looking mud asp, that has sometimes been mistaken for an eel, has in several instances proved fatal to those who expose themselves by wading in muddy creeks." This looks very much like a reference to the horn snake under a new name, for this snake really lives in mud and its sides and belly are a "livid" red.

The single case of scepticism on the part of a person mentioning the horn snake that has come to my attention in works of the nature thus far quoted is that of J. H. Hinton. In his *History and Topography of the United States*, published in London, 1832, he writes (Vol. II, p. 185) that "The accounts of the deadly venom of the Horn-snake being without actual attestation by fact, are considered as unfounded."

There is no doubt that this list of references to the hoop snake could be much extended. I have not examined current sources, for there is no difficulty in gathering any number of contemporary accounts of the hoop snake and the horn snake from alleged eyewitnesses, especially in anyone of the southern states. These accounts are not to be confused with yarns spun for the misinformation of the traveler. If one expresses doubt, he runs real danger of seriously offending the narrator; and the stories are attached to perfectly definite and well-known species of snakes, which are greatly dreaded and shunned. The first specimen of the "stingin' snake" that I collected, I brought in alive to a camp in

Louisiana, and I had difficulty in convincing my camp mates that it was not by virtue of occult power over snakes that I escaped the predicted death. I had already gathered accounts from a considerable number of eyewitnesses, of the death of various animals from the sting of the "stingin' snake," and when I confronted my informants with the living source of their fears, they were forced to make the difficult choice between their traditional belief and the evidence of their eyes and of common sense.

In the locality in question (Natchitoches Parish), it was *Farancia abacura*, the horn snake or mud snake of other sections, to which the stinging powers were attributed. There was no hoop snake story current in this section of Louisiana. Only one family, which had come from Georgia, knew of it. All the members of this family would have been glad to take oath to having seen the veritable hooping of the hoop snake in their native state. They apparently referred their experience to the rainbow snake (*Abastor erythrogrammus*), which in many parts of the South is known as the "hoop snake."

Both of these snakes lend themselves well to their legendary roles. They are large, brilliantly colored serpents, which because of their habits are very rarely seen, for they burrow in soft mud or soil in wet localities, or frequent swampy areas which are sparsely inhabited. The terminal scale of their tail is considerably enlarged and is spinous or horn-like, so that the examination of a dead snake, the only kind ever examined, lends apparent support to the theory of a sting. Further support is derived from the actions of the living snake, though it is doubtful if the authors or bearers of the "stingin' snake" stories ever observed the reptiles alive. When held in the hand, the mud snake (which is the more familiar to me) coils around the hand, and explores or feels about with the tip of the tail with sufficient force to give a considerable prick, though I doubt if even a large snake would penetrate the skin with its tail spine. This is the normal, or slightly modified, habit of constricting snakes in general, which attempt to tuck the tail beneath a coil or otherwise secure a purchase for it, to enable them to constrict.

An account by T. G. Dabney (*Copeia*, No. 73, p. 73. 1919), who was a good observer both of snakes and of human reactions to them, illuminates the problem of explaining the many eyewitness accounts. He writes, concerning a specimen which was brought to him:

"It had just been killed, but had enough vitality for tail movements. It was carefully carried on a fire poker to the porch for good light. The poker was pressed on the tail, which set up a lively oscillation, and the observer distinctly saw a sting, protruded and withdrawn 'in a flash,' but saw no repetition of the exposure. A dissection showed the tail vertebrae descending in a diminuendo to the fine pointed extremity of the tail, and no place for a 'sting.' This shows that we are very likely to see what we expect to see, when snakes are involved; and the average person is prone to accept first impressions, and any extravagant statement about snakes, without any inclination to verify, or disprove them."

The most pronounced development of a tail spine in snakes that has come to my notice

is that of some of the blind burrowing snakes of the family Typhlopidae. Living specimens held in the hand make the same exploration with the tail spine, which is very sharp, as I have described above in the case of the horn snake. Mr. Herbert Lang, leader of the American Museum Congo Expedition, informs me that the African natives believe that the tail of these burrowing snakes is used as a sting, and that these snakes are relatively abundant in Central and West Africa. It seems a plausible hypothesis, therefore, that the stories of stinging snakes were brought from Africa by the negroes imported as slaves. The transfer of this reputation from the burrowing snakes of Africa to American burrowing snakes offers no difficulty to anyone familiar with the permutations and combinations of popular names for animals.

The habit of the common black snake of eastern North America of gliding along at great speed over the tops of bushes, without descending to the ground, may have a bearing on the origin of the belief in the hoop snake's rolling method of progression. Where the horn snake and rainbow snake do not occur, there seems to be a tendency to identify the hoop snake with the black snake or blue racer.

The habit of the common black snake of eastern North America of gliding along at great speed over the tops of bushes, without descending to the ground, may have a bearing on the origin of the belief in the hoop snake's rolling method of progression.

The only remaining hypothesis for the origin of the stories of the stinging snake and the hoop snake that has come to my attention rests on the comparison with scorpions. Scorpions do have a veritable sting in their tails, and they do advance with the sting raised over the back "in the ready position of striking." The remoteness of the scorpions from snakes in zoölogical classification seems to offer little difficulty to the popular imagination. In the same section of Louisiana where I collected my first hoop snakes, I heard repeatedly about "stingin' lizards." My informants thought they had scored a clear triumph against my scepticism when they showed me scorpions to prove their assertion that there *were* "stingin' lizards" that really could sting!

The Jews of Arabia

12December2014

bbc.com

The Jews may have originated in the Middle East but they were long ago scattered far and wide - to the Gulf, among other places. Few now remain, except in Iran. But a century ago, writes Matthew Teller, there was even a proposal to found a Jewish state at an oasis near Bahrain.

In 1859 Griffith Jenkins, a senior British naval officer in the Gulf, wrote to a subordinate named Hiskal.

Hiskal - or Yehezkel - ben Yosef was a minor official representing British interests in Muscat. And, like his predecessor in the post in the 1840s (a man named Reuben), he was Jewish.

Jews had been living in Muscat since at least 1625. In 1673, according to one traveller, a synagogue was being built, implying permanence. British officer James Wellsted also noted the existence of a Jewish community on a visit in the 1830s.

Jenkins's letter talks obliquely about the Imam (a Muslim ruler who held sway in Oman's interior) and the arrival of a man from Persia. He ends by asking Hiskal to explain the matter in private - and then, remarkably, had his letter translated into Hebrew.

British Library

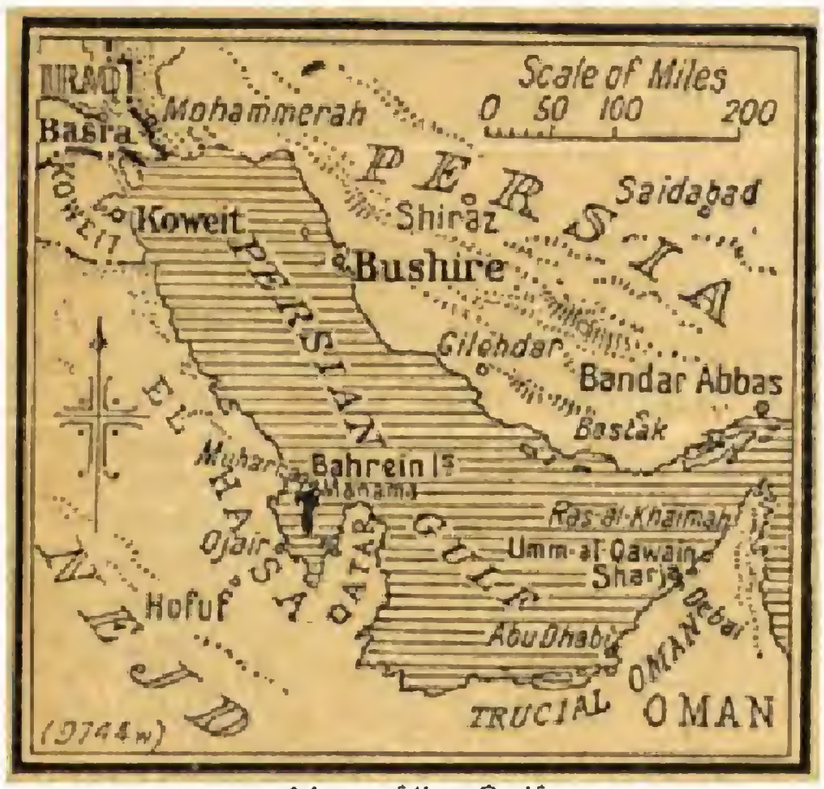
British Library curator Daniel Lowe, who unearthed the letter recently, is flummoxed. With Arabic in daily use, and Hiskal doubtless able to read English, why would Jenkins communicate in Hebrew?

Lowe guesses that he may have been using Hebrew as a secret code, to be understood by Hiskal but not by messengers - and, perhaps crucially, not by the Imam and the "man from Persia".

Round the Bend

A series of tales from the days when Britain ruled India and the Gulf, told with documents newly digitised by the

- The diplomat's portable handbook (wheelbarrow required)
- The singing sailor of Oman
- Monsieur Romieu - a 'man of talents'
- The pearl fishers of Arabia
- The diplomat who said 'No' to Saudi oil



Map of the Gulf

- Love to Patrick
- The ultimate hardship posting

But if this remains a mystery, it's well-known that Jews once lived all across Arabia.

The Koran records Jewish tribes in and around Medina in the 7th Century, and the medieval traveller Benjamin of Tudela, who passed through in about 1170, describes sizeable Jewish populations throughout modern-day Iran, Iraq and Saudi Arabia, as well as on both shores of the Gulf - at Kish (Iran) and Qatif (Saudi Arabia).

Baghdad had been home to Jews since the 6th Century BC. Around the time of WW1, officials estimated the city's Jews to number between 55,000 and 80,000, in a total population of 200,000 - a proportion equal to or greater than that in centres of European Jewry such as Warsaw or Berlin.

Today, fewer than 10 individuals remain.

For a combination of reasons including economic migration, political pressure and outright persecution - notably after the State of Israel was declared in 1948 - almost all the Jewish communities of the Gulf countries dwindled to nothing in the 20th Century.

Two survive. In Iran perhaps 25,000 Jews remain, while Bahrain has a tiny Jewish minority, comprising only a few families - though they wield significant power. Until last year, Bahrain's ambassador to the US was a Jewish woman, Houda Nonoo.

Neither community, though, has had an easy time. Racist attacks were being recorded by the British in Iran in 1905 and in Bahrain in 1929.

Meanwhile, British diplomat John Gordon Lorimer hints at tensions caused by Jewish businessmen in Kuwait, who distilled "spirituous liquors" and thus enabled local Muslims to break religious laws.

> The Jews amount to between 100 and 200 souls; they have a synagogue of their own, called a Kanīsah; at Kuwait they seem to be notorious chiefly for the distillation of spirituots liquors which some of the Muhammadan population consume secretly in dread of the Shaikh.

In 1917 an outlandish plan was floated to use Bahrain as the bridgehead from which to establish a "Jewish State of Eastern Arabia" in the desert nearby, but it came to nothing. Just weeks afterwards British Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour gave his support to the idea of establishing a "national home for the Jewish people" in Palestine.

Today, the cultural legacy of Jewish Arabia survives most tangibly in music. This evocative song, Ya Shayile El Gerre - recorded in the 1930s on 78rpm shellac disc - features the Jewish Iraqi singer Sett Salima Pasha, accompanied almost certainly here by the Jewish Kuwaiti musicians Daoud Al-Kuwaiti (oud) and his brother Saleh (violin).

Round the Bend *is a series of tales from the days when Britain ruled India and the Gulf, told with documents newly digitised by the British Library. You can* explore the archive yourself.

British Library curator Daniel Lowe contributed original research for this article.

Selected documents:

Photograph of an Aden Jew, *photographer unknown (1870s)*

Jews in the Persian Gulf region, *by John Gordon Lorimer (1908)*

"Throughout the Muslim countries, these unhappy people [the Jews] have been subjected to persecution." *George Curzon, MP (1892)*

British diplomatic note mentioning the Jewish shopkeepers of Bahrain (1927)

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13 November 2014

Odd Staffordshire

The legend of the Chained Oak

The legend of the Chained Oak

Sam Hale

The Alton Towers' attraction 'HEX The Legend of the Towers' is based on the story of the nearby Chained Oak. It is one of Staffordshire's great legends.

For the purposes of the ride at Alton Towers, the original legend has actually been altered.

And, yes, the tree really does exist - but you won't find much information about it in any local history book or guide.

The only way you'll find out about the true legend and locate the actual tree is by asking the locals of Alton village.

Ghostly story

The story goes something like this....

On an autumn night in 1821, The Earl of Shrewsbury was returning to his home, Alton Towers, when, mysteriously an old man appeared in the road. The coach stopped to find why he was there, and the man begged for the charity of a coin.

The Earl cruelly dismissed him, so the old man placed a curse on him. The old man croaked: "For every branch on the Old Oak Tree here that falls... a member of the Earl's family will die."

The Earl dismissed him and carried on his way...But that night, a storm brewed up, and a single branch from the old oak tree broke and fell.

Later that very same night, a member of the Earl's family suddenly, and mysteriously died.

The next day, the Earl ordered his servants to chain every branch together to prevent other branches from falling.
So... we have a 'chained oak'.

Fact or fiction?

True or false?
Well, even now the branches of the oak tree remain in chains. There's also a set of stone

steps leading up to it and a clearing circles the tree. Mysterious indeed because someone must have spent a lot of time and resources on completing all this.

So... is the legend real? Did the Earl really order the oak chained up? Or did later generations chain it up in a spirit of fun and mischief?

Or.... and here's the big one... is the tree really cursed?

last updated: 23/12/2009 at 07:49
created: 28/07/2008

Have Your Say

THANKS FOR ALL YOUR COMMENTS. THIS BOARD IS NOW CLOSED.

matthew
witches can only be women i belife in it becouse i heard about it when i was i kid it did look creepy.can somebody dy when a branch fall off today

Darren Lea
seens i have been on the ride. And trust me. it takes alot to spook me on a ride. But the story got me going. So i dug up a few things about it. And im not 100% on it all yet. BUT. There are two versions of this story. The one Alton towers gives. And that the other the earls son gets hit by the branch the next day, whilst on a horse riding trip. He then died. Nobody for sure is ever going to find out the truth. And to be honest, if we did know. it would kill the legand. And Laura, i think your right. For Alton Towers to go through that much to made to legand bigger than it is, is a bit much. Carbon testing would tell how old the rust is on the chains themselfs. True or not true. Lets believe what we want to believe about it. In the end, you'll never really know.

stefan
i thinks its true because when you go it dosent feel right what so ever and tree is so old its rotting and the chains are rotting aswell.

HK
I live near the tree, and wont go near it, seems spooky enough for me

pete
been there seen it,it could be true and looks impressive

Martin
I believe that it is all true, because when I visited it this year, you could tell just by looking at the chains that they are nearly two hundred years old. Also, when you ride Hex, you may notice in the queue line inside, they reveal a 40 second video clip which was taken back in the early 19th century, to prove the earl really did chain it up.

sam lee
i agree with laur as this would just be pointless to just go to alton village and chain up a

tree.but on the other hand i do believe in curses and the dark arts so the tree may well be cursed but are there any records of someone near that tree who died later mysteriously?

Dominic
Apparently in April of this year one of the branches broke of the tree and of the descendants of the Earl of Shrewsbury confirmed that no one has died. At least for now!

shelly
when we went to alton towers they said it was an old woman not a old man.so what is the real gender???????? tell me please.thank youyour sincerly shelly

Laura
I work at alton towers and read some of the literature by them about the legend and the tree, and i do believ that it was alot of effort to go through just to chain up an old oakk tree there are steps and a visible path leading up to and around the tree even if the tree was of some value it is still alot to go through just to preserve it. I think the legend is true and that the Hex ride complements the legend well!

alex
i think this may be a curse, but the story that i heard was that once there was a witch,

kieran packer
it is all true me and my mate heard the story off my great granddad

Gina
We visited it in augusy 2006 and it gives an unsettling feeling even in daylight. Some of the chain, the tree has grown around. We visited again last week and i was sad to see that a large part has fallen and some hooligans have sprayed blue paint in a swastika sign on the tree. very sad :(

kath
i live right by it, alton towers making the rifde HEX and bringing all this publicity to the tree has caused its downfall, with kids goin up there at night and mucking about, swinging off the branches-hence some of them falling off.

Jonathan
After reading the latest comments about the chained oak, I think the curse is still intact. When I went to see the tree last time, I still felt this strange, dark, unfriendly presence surrounding the tree like there is someone or something there watching in anger, something that doesn't want anyone visiting the tree. I don't know why but that presence is still there after the branches fell.Sure some of the big branches have fallen and many people think it was due to one of the chains rusting through, the tree being very old or the very strong winds that were blowing when the branches fell but the way I see it, I think its quite the opposite to any of the three. I believe it was due to the curse. If I recall, there was a movie being made about the chained oak aroung that time but it got scrapped due to continuity hence the fallen branches. The way I see it, I believe thats why the branches fell, to stop the movie being completed. This is my way of saying the curse is still alive. If there have been sightings at the oak tree as

the latest comments have said than I must be right.I'm not saying believe me. I'm just saying what I believe about the chained oak. Believe what you want to believe. All I can say now is this. The next time you visit the oak tree, be very careful, be aware of the oak tree's surroundings and don't go alone.

Alexandra Longden
I lived in alton when i was but just a baby and mum told me the tree was chained even then way before they made the hex ride and there was a book about it too so i think it must be true

Jonathan Malton
I went on the hex ride and thought it was fantastic. when i came home, i did some reaserch and it is Probably true as there is a chained. As a good historian I think it is true, but more reaserch needs to be done in the towers and a test on the oak tree to see if it is really cursed

sophie
i live near alton towers and have been loads of times. ive also been on walks to the chained oak with my family. all the branches are still chained up. and the chains do look really old!

Unknown
Look at it this way: We might not believe in the curse, but back then it would have been very believable. I think that although there isnt actually a curse, the Earl DID have the tree chained, and they DID believe there was a curse. I'd also like to see what they actually found when they opened the castle, maybe there really was a hidden experiments room...

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Humans have been personifying our sense of impending doom ever since we learned how to write. The Mesopotamians were busy talking about the minor plague-demon Namtar, responsible for doom and destiny. The Greeks had Moros, the offspring of Nyx (night) and brother to Moirai (Fate), one of the nasties released from Pandora's Box (turns out it was technically a big jar), and responsible for ushering us to our untimely ends. As a species we have an overdeveloped sense that we are inevitably barreling towards a gruesome fate, and consequently, Fate is rarely a benign personage. When some supernatural critter arrives to announce your fate, it's unlikely that he's telling you that you are holding the winning lottery numbers. Harbingers and portents, when they are dressed up and embodied, tend to signify your imminent failure or death. While bipolar disorder, depression, and panic attacks can manifest in feelings of impending doom, apparently the sense that the world is ending can also accompany physical ailments such as coronary heart disease, myocardial infarction, and aortic dissection, which makes a lot of sense, since at that point you're likely fixing to shuffle off the mortal coil in short order unless you have a good health care plan (a mythological entity unto itself). It's no wonder the alcohol, tobacco, and drug industries have historically been a good investment, since we spend most of our time waiting for the other shoe to fall, as observed by Edgar Allen Poe when he remarked, "I have absolutely no pleasure in the stimulants in which I sometimes so madly indulge. It has not been in the pursuit of pleasure that I have periled life and reputation and reason. It has been the desperate attempt to escape from torturing memories, from a sense of insupportable loneliness and a dread of some strange impending doom". Thus, it should come as only a mild surprise that Paris, *La Ville-Lumière* ("The City of Light"), where love is always in the air, has for four hundred years hosted a resident harbinger of death and destruction, known affectionately as "Le Petit Homme Rouge" or The Red Man of the Tuileries.

Little red men telling us the sky is falling are not as uncommon as you would think in French-influenced folklore, as a common figure in Normandy is the subclass of faerie-like Lutin (a sort of house-spirit) called the *Nain Rouge* (French for "Red Dwarf"). But the Norman Nain Rouge is more of a helping hand to fisherman when treated with respect, in many ways like the Irish leprechaun. The Nain Rouge hitched a ride to North America during the French colonization of Quebec, and filtered down to Detroit, where he took on many of the traits that are also associated with The Red Man of the Tuileries from the very founding of Fort Pontchartrain du Détroit by Antoine de la Mothe Cadillac in 1701 in so far as whenever he was reported by the local populace, things started to go epically wrong (for more on Detroit's Le Nain Rouge see my article "Le Nain Rouge: The Historical Harbinger of Detroit's Doom"). The Red Man of the Tuileries, a close cousin of Le Nain Rouge began making appearances in Paris as early as the 16th Century, said to have revealed himself to Queen Catherine de' Medici (1519-1589 A.D.), and has been spotted in the company of royalty ever since.

Popular tradition asserts that the palace of the Tuileries has been for centuries the resort of a demon, familiarly known by the name of " L'Homme Rouge," or the Red man; who is seen wandering in all parts of the chateau whenever some great misfortune menaces its royal inhabitants; but who retreats at other periods to a small

niche in the Tour de V'Horloge, the central tower built by Catherine de Medici, for the use of her royal astrologers (Gore, 1839, p323).

There are two separate origin stories regarding the debut of the Red Man of the Tuilieries. In one version, the construction of the Tuileries Palace was commissioned in 1564 by the widowed Catherine de' Medici after the death of her husband King Henry II of France, into which, in her impatience she moved before the building had been completed. Before the architects could put the finishing touches on the palace, Catherine is said to have abandoned the premises, having repeatedly encountered an already resident and decidedly creepy "Le Petit Homme Rouge" that told her she would die near "Saint-Germain".

In her haste to have her new palace, Catherine came to occupy some of the salles while they were yet unfinished, and was preparing to celebrate their completion with a series of splendid fetes, when it was suddenly announced that she had taken a strong aversion to her new residence and was about to abandon it forever. This was because a certain being, clothed in a red pour-point and red hose, which appeared in the evenings in the upper stories of the building, had prophesied that she should die near to Saint-Germain. As the Tuileries were in the parish of Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois, the queen forsook the palace in which she had been so greatly interested; she refused to visit again Saint-Germain-en-Laye, and she even declined to cross the bridges lest she should find herself in the vicinity of the abbey of Saint-Germain, then situated just outside the Porte Bucy. It is impossible to cheat Destiny,—after having avoided for the rest of her life, with the greatest care, anything suggestive of this dreaded name, she fell dangerously ill in the Hotel de Soissons, which she had constructed near the parish Saint-Eustache; feeling herself at the point of death, she asked the name of the Benedictine monk who was administering to her the last sacraments, and learned that it was Laurent de Saint-Germain! The little red man of the Tuileries remained; and he continued always a prophet of evil for the royal masters of this palace. He was seen for the three nights which preceded the assassination of Henri IV; he announced to the young Louis XIV the approaching troubles of the Fronde; during the Revolution, he wandered through the attics of the palace on the nights before the 20th of June and the 10th of August, and on the night of the king's flight to Varennes he even slept in the royal bed; but he avenged his royal proteges when the insults to their memory became too flagrant before their very palace. On the day after the 14th of July, 1793, there was set up in front of the Tuileries a grotesque monument to the Manes de Marat, consisting of a sort of niche in which were piled up indiscriminately various household articles having belonged to that sanguinary dictator,—his bath-tub, still stained with his blood, his lamp, his bath-robe, his inkstand, and—crowning all—his bust, the whole intermingled and adorned with appropriate descriptions, devices, and emblems. One morning, the sentry, placed before this commemorative monument to protect it from wandering and sacrilegious dogs, was found dead at his post,—of cold, according to the official report, in the month of July! The real cause was much more terrible,—though as to the means by which this cause became known, history is silent. As the great clock of the deserted palace struck midnight, the sentry suddenly saw through the windows a light passing from room to room of the upper stories; then it descended the grand staircase, the great door of the central pavilion opened, and

closed with a dull report behind a little man clothed all in red and carrying a lantern which flashed mysterious lights around him. This strange being approached the terrified soldier, leaping lightly over the disjointed stones of the pavement, turned the light of his lantern on all the various objects of the monument as if to examine them, and then gave utterance in the silence of the night to such a burst of laughter and infernal scorn (not unnaturally) that the sentry fell dead with horror (Walton, 1899, p34-35).

Yet another version of the history of the Red Man of the Tuileries is similarly associated with Catherine de' Medici. After the death of King Henry II, Catherine acted as regent for her underage son Francis II (who died in 1560), and then for her other son Charles IX (died in 1574), and then wielded great influence in the court of her third son, Henry III. This was a time of almost continuous civil war and religious conflict in France, and Catherine established a reputation as a ruthless (her own letters seem to support this characterization) and powerful woman. Obviously, like any good political operator, Catherine needed some muscle for intimidation purposes, and reportedly found a reliable henchman to commit the occasional murder of her political opponents in a former butcher who went by the name Jean l'écorcheur ("John the Skinner"). Jean ended up knowing way too much about where all the metaphorical and literal bodies were buried, so Catherine had him wacked, as it just so happens, in the Garden of the Tuileries. Unfortunately, his body vanished and the Queen's astrologer mentioned that he subsequently had a vision of a "red man" who said he would haunt the Tuileries until their destruction. The Tuileries would become the official Parisian residence of every French monarch from Henry IV (1553-1610) to Napoleon III (1808-1873). Living in the Tuileries appears to entail putting up with the presence of Le Petit Homme Rouge, even when you have a fancy title like Emperor. He continued to make appearances among ill-fated French royalty on and off for a number of years. "On the eve of May 14, 1610, the date of Henry IV's assassination, the Red Spectre made his appearance in the Tuileries. He foretold the troubles of the Fronde to Louis XIV when that monarch was a mere child" (Walsh, 1914, p257). Of course, in that bloody epoch we call the French Revolution, generally a bad time to be an aristocrat, the Red Man of the Tuileries put in more frequent appearances. Marie Antoinette was guillotined on October 16, 1793, and our tiny red friend was sighted just prior to that.

This goblin, known also as the Little Red Man of the Tuileries, is said to haunt the palace and its adjacent building, showing himself on the eve of disaster. His first recorded appearance was a few days before the 10th of August 1793. Marie Antoinette's women were sitting in the Salle des Gardes when they became suddenly aware of the presence of a small man, clothed from crown to heel in scarlet, who looked at them with such unearthly eyes that they were frozen with terror. They rushed to the apartment of Madame la Dauphine and related their adventure (Walsh, 1888, p121).

Napoleon Bonaparte seems to have had a complex relationship with the Little Red Man of the Tuileries. "But who was he—this crimson ghost? Evidently 'Le Petit Homme Rouge '—the Little Red Man of the Tuileries, the familiar demon of the place, the eidolon of the First Napoleon, to whom it is said he appeared in Egypt, on the eve of the Battle of the Pyramids,

muttering the word ' Moscow.' He was seen again, according to the testimony of a grenadier of unimpeachable veracity, coming out of the Emperor's tent on the night before the Battle of Austerlitz. When challenged and bidden to give the countersign, he screamed 'St. Helena,' and vanished with an unmelodious twang" (Sala, 1880, p343). Other reports of Napoleon Bonapartes' encounters with the Le Petit Homme Rouge suggest a working relationship in his rule of the French Empire from 1804-1814, and again in 1815.

He visited Napoleon I at Cairo, shortly after the battle of the Pyramids, and predicted to the Little Corporal his brilliant destiny. Chamberlain's Anecdotes of Napoleon and his Court tells this story: In the month of January, 1812 (the winter preceding the Russian campaign), the Red Man asked a sentinel if he might speak to the emperor. The soldier replying in the negative, the demon brushed him aside, and ran quickly up the steps. He said to a chamberlain, "Tell the Emperor that a little Red Man whom he saw in Egypt wishes to see him again." Napoleon admitted the petit homme; a long conversation followed in the private cabinet; from a few words that were overheard Napoleon seemed to be pleading for something which was refused. Finally the door was opened. The Red Man came out, passed quickly through the corridors, and disappeared on the 'grand staircase which nobody saw him descend. Beranger celebrates this spectre in a poem entitled Le Petit Rouge, Homme, supposed to be spoken by a charwoman who had done duty in the Tuileries for forty years (Walsh, 1914, p257).

The little Red Man is also credited with predicting Napolean's failures at Waterloo, Fontainebleau, and the scrapped invasion of England. Apparently he also visited Josephine to let her know that she would be Empress of the French.

He also visited the cliffs of Boulogne to foretell the failure of the projected invasion of England; and, again, in the last years of the First Empire, he showed himself both at Fontainebleau and at Waterloo. Madame Lenormand, the so-called Sibyl of the early years of the nineteenth century, who is said to have predicted to Josephine Beauharnais that she would some day be Empress of the French, wrote an imaginative book on the subject of the Little Red Man, in which she blundered sadly by asserting that he was the "good genius" of Napoleon, whereas he was at the most merely his "candid friend" (Vizetelly, 1912, pV).

Le Petit Homme Rouge shows up yet again in the overthrow of the restored monarchy and recall of Napoleon. By this time, his existence gets complicated by the juvenile pranks of a gang of French art students, keeping in mind that Jerry Lewis has long been considered a comic genius in France.

The next apparition of the Red Man was in 1814, in the presence of the little King of Rome and his attendants, and he was again seen, according to the report, a little before the death of Louis XVIII.—this time in the Galerie du Louvre. In 1815, however, much discredit was thrown upon the ghost's existence by the practical joking of some art students attached to Gros's studio at the Louvre. Some of the Louvre apartments had been placed at the disposal of ruined emigrants who had returned to France and

found a protectress in the Duchesse d'Angouleme. Among these were two old maiden ladies and a Knight of St. Louis who were dining together one evening when a "grand diable rogue" came down the chimney and, snatching a leg of mutton from the table, disappeared with it by the way he came. The incident was reported to the Duchesse, who sought the presence of the King and with tears pouring down her face declared her conviction that some great misfortune was impending. The King laughed at his niece's fears and sent for a chimney-sweeper. A boy who went up the chimney to look for the "diable rogue" did not return. A man was then sent up, but nothing more was seen or heard of him. The greatest excitement reigned in the palace, and at length a fireman undertook to explore the haunted chimney. He returned and explained the mystery. It appeared that the chimney passed by Gros's studio, and that his pupils by making a hole in the wall, were enabled to play these pranks upon illustrious personages. They had made the two sweeps their confederates. But the fireman was not to be bribed (Walsh, 1888, p121-122).

The Paris Commune was a revolutionary and socialist government that briefly ruled Paris for a few months in 1871, and during this time of upheaval, the Red Man of the Tuileries made yet another appearance before the Tuileries Palace was burned to the ground.

He was last seen during the Commune. The old watchman who had charge of the building was going his rounds one night, when he became aware of a scarlet-clad figure in the gloom, skulking behind one of the pillars. He made for it, but it seemed to pass round the pillar and disappear. He looked about everywhere, but there was nothing. The old man had his own reasons for thinking that he might have been deceived on this occasion, so he took nothing but coffee after dinner next night before making his rounds; yet there was the Red Man again. This time he was leaning meditatively on his arm, and looking down on Paris. The watchman shouted at him; he turned round, faced him with the same look of icy woe, and disappeared. The old man ran for help, late as it was, and they made a thorough search of the place. They did find something red; their search ended in a *sauve qui peut*, as they saw the first glare of the incendiary fire that was to reduce the Palace of the Tuileries to a heap of ruins (London Daily News, 1883, p153-154).

It is said that the Red Man did not vanish, rather simply moved his headquarters to the Elysee Palace, and while he's been less active in the 19th-21st Century, he still pokes his head out to let us know when we are charging headlong towards our doom.

Beranger, whom the Red Man favoured with a visit about the time when the restored French Monarchy was collapsing, was better inspired when he composed a ballad warning King Charles X of impending calamity. The years passed, and still the Little Red Man haunted the Tuileries, seeing and hearing many strange things as he flitted, invisible, from room to room, as well as giving due notice, by occasional appearances, of some startling changes of regime. He saw the Orleans Monarchy collapse, the ensuing Republic expire, the Second Empire swept away by foreign invasion and national wrath. But, at last, the day came when the Tuileries itself perished, annihilated by incendiaries. Of course the Little Red Man had known what would happen, and had

already decided to transfer his quarters to the Elysee Palace, which is still his address for national business purposes. But during the last five-and-thirty years he has led a less active life than formerly. True, he found it necessary to warn Marshal MacMahon that he would have to give in or go out, and President Grevy that no good would come of a certain great decorations scandal. He had to appear, too, at the time when Le brave General Boulanger threatened the Republic; he paid a flying visit to Lyons when President Carnot was unhappily assassinated; and at the critical period of the great Dreyfus case, he gave a private warning to President Faure, who was shocked to such a degree by so unexpected an apparition that he was seized with a fit which unfortunately proved fatal. Of more recent times the Little Red Man has enjoyed plenty of leisure (Vizetelly, 1912, pV-VI).

Certain calamities are avoidable. I tried explaining this to my 5 year old son, who currently believes "accidents happen" is an explanation for absolutely anything that goes wrong. I pointed out that while accidents do indeed happen, we can sometimes take preventative measures to lessen the probability of disaster. But I find myself wondering if this is entirely accurate. Luckily, I am neither French, nor royalty, and therefore think nothing of my occasional encounters with little red men. Perhaps humanity has clawed its way to the top of the food chain through an innate pessimism, always planning for the worst, for as Johann Wolfgang von Goethe said, "It is the strange fate of man, that even in the greatest of evils the fear of the worst continues to haunt him".

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The Single Brother's House, or just Brother's House, is located in the historic Old Salem Village and Gardens in Winston-Salem. This reconstructed old Moravian village was once home to one of North Carolina's most beloved ghosts.

The building was originally used as a communal home for unmarried men in the Moravian settlement. Moravians have a strong tradition of keeping excellent records, so we have an unusually detailed account of how this ghost came in to being. The late, great North Carolina folklorist Richard Walser quotes the record at length in his invaluable and highly recommended book North Carolina Legends.

On March 25, 1786 a shoemaker named Andreas Kresmer was killed while excavating a new foundation for an addition to The Brother's House. Working late, around midnight Brother Kresmer was caught beneath a falling bank of earth and passed away a few hours later. This kind man and was much mourned by his fellow Brethren.

For years afterwards, strange sounds that resembled the tap of a shoemaker's hammer were heard throughout the house. A small man wearing a red cap like the one Brother Kresmer had been wearing when he died was also seen scurrying through the halls.

One of the most famous encounters with the Little Red Man is the story of Little Betsy, the granddaughter of a resident of the house who lived there after it had been converted into a home for Moravian widows. Little Betsy had been left deaf from an early childhood illness, but could still speak. She knew nothing of the ghost or the accident, but one day while visiting her grandmother rushed excitedly in from the garden and told of a small man wearing a red cap who had beckoned her to come and play.

According to legend, the Little Red Man's appearances were brought to rest when he made an ill-advised appearance before a prominent member of the community showing an important visitor around the cellar. The visitor was shocked to discover such disreputable supernatural goings-on in a respectable Moravian dormitory. It's never good to show up the boss, and a minister was called in to lay the ghost to rest, which apparently worked. The Little Red Man has not been seen since.

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The Macabre Legacy of the Heroes of the American Revolution

By strangeremains*on*July 4, 2014 • (1)

The American Revolution was a war of independence fought by legendary men who managed to defeat one of the greatest military forces of all time. History teachers lecture about George Washington's victory in the Battle of Trenton in 1776, the incendiary *Common Sense* written by Thomas Paine, Benjamin Franklin's diplomacy, or the naval victories of John Paul Jones. But they don't discuss the macabre legacy each of these men left behind after they died.

The First "Zombie-in-Chief"

George Washington's death mask.

George Washington (1732-1799) is one of America's Founding Fathers, was the Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army during the American Revolution, and the first president of the United States of America. Washington served two terms as president from 1789-1797, after which he moved to his estate in Mt. Vernon, VA. He was only able to enjoy two years of retirement before he died on December 14th, 1799.

In the hours after his death, some of the people close to Washington discussed reanimating his corpse because they couldn't stand burying "the indispensible man." The person most passionate about this idea was William Thornton, a close friend of Washington, a physician trained in European medical schools, and an amateur architect who designed the United States Capitol.

Thornton arrived in Mt. Vernon the morning after Washington passed and suggested a unique (for lack of a better word) method of resuscitating Washington's body. Twenty years after Washington's death Thornton wrote:

I proposed to attempt his restoration, in the following manner. First to thaw him in cold water, then to lay him in blankets, & by degrees & by friction to give him warmth, and to put into activity the minute blood vessels, at the same time to open a passage to the Lungs by the Trachaea, and to inflate them with air, to produce an artificial respiration, and to transfuse blood into him from a lamb.

Though we don't know if Martha Washington truly considered this a viable option, we do know it was never attempted. George Washington's body lies in a marble sarcophagus in a brick tomb on his Mt. Vernon estate-hopefully to never come back to life.

Thomas Paine's monument on North Avenue in New Rochelle, New York. Image Credit: Wikipedia

Thomas Paine's monument on North Avenue in New Rochelle, New York. Image Credit: Wikipedia

The Body Snatching of "Citizen Paine"

Thomas Paine (1737-1809) was political activist, philosopher, and author. One of his most famous works is *Common Sense*, a pamphlet distributed among the colonies that challenged the authority of the British monarchy and colonialism. This pamphlet was innovative because it outright called for independence from Great Britain and was written in plain English so that the public could easily understand it. This political work inspired patriots and made Paine a hero of the American Revolution.

Later in life he became a political outcast because of public feuds with powerful men like Gouvenour Morris and George Washington. His book *The Age of Reason,* which is about God, deism and reason, made Paine a social pariah and created tension between him and religious communities because it attacked organized religion.

Despite these attacks, Paine wanted to be buried in a Quaker cemetery, the Christian demonination of his birth. After his death on June 8th, 1809 his final request was not honored because no Quaker cemetery would take his body, so he was buried under a simple tombstone in his farm in New Rochelle, NY.

Ten years later, William Cobbett (1763-1835), an English journalist and political adversary of Thomas Paine, exhumed his body because he felt a kinship to the deceased philosopher. He brought Paine's bones back to England intending to give him a lavish funeral and build a mausoleum in his honor. Because Thomas Paine was not a popular figure in England at the time and the British newspapers accused Cobbett of being a Resurrection Man, or body snatcher, public support for a funeral for Thomas Paine dissipated.

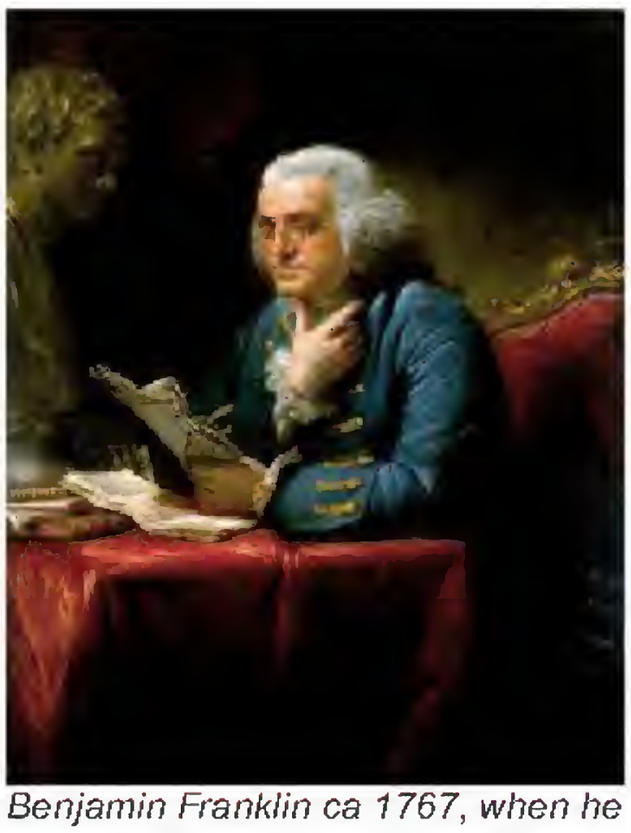
Cobbett put Paine's bones in a trunk and shoved them in a corner of his house, where they remained forgotten until Cobbett's death in 1835. Since Cobbett was in debt when he passed, his estate was auctioned off to pay his bills. But the auctioneer managing the estate refused to handle human remains and gave the trunk with Paine's bones to one of Cobbett's neighbors. The neighbor in turn gave the trunk to Ben Tilly, Cobbett's former secretary. After Tilly, Paine's bones are reported to have changed hands three times before disappearing from history.

Thomas Paine's brain surfaced in England in 1900 when the hardened tissue was purchased by Moncure Conway, an American Abolitionist determined to find Paine's body. Conway brought the famous author's brain back to America and buried it on the grounds of Paine's farm in New Rochelle, NY.

The "Citizen Paine Restoration Initiative" was started to recover Thomas Paine's bones and bury them on the writer's farm. Those efforts seem to be unsuccessful so far. There have been reports of his skull in a few places as far off as Australia, and a woman in Brighton,

England claimed to have his mandible (jaw bone).

The Skeletons in Benjamin Franklin's Basement



Benjamin Franklin ca 1767, when he would have been living at the Craven Street House. Image Credit: Wikipedia.

Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790) was one of the Founding Fathers, the first American diplomat, an author and printer, a political theorist, and scientist. He served as French diplomat from 1776 to 1778 and his job was to gain French financial support for American independence. As an author, he is best known for *Poor Richard's Almanack*, a book consisting of proverbs. As a scientist, he is renowned for his work on electricity. He facilitated many civic organizations, including Philadelphia's fire department and a university.

Before the American Revolution, Benjamin Franklin lived in London between 1757 to 1775. Franklin, who considered himself an Englishman for most of his life, was in England as an agent to Parliament for the Pennsylvania Assembly. His home during this period was at 36 Craven Street.

Franklin didn't consider himself a revolutionary until 1775, when he was called before the Privy Council and humiliated. When he returned to Philadelphia in May of 1775 the American Revolution was well on its way.

In 1998, construction workers doing repair work in the basement at 36 Craven Street found more than 1200 pieces of bone (human and nonhuman) in a pit that was one meter wide and one meter deep. Though these bones dated to Franklin's occupation, he wasn't a crazed mass murderer.

It turns out the human bones (some pictured here) were the remnants of a clandestine anatomy school run by William Hewson, a close friend of Franklin and son-in-law to his landlady. Prior to The Anatomy Act of 1832, it was illegal for teachers, medical students, and doctors to dissect donated bodies, so dissection and disposal of human remains had to be done in secret. When Hewson was done with the bodies he buried the bones in the basement, rather than discard them outside of the house and risk getting caught.

A forensic investigation found that the bones belonged more than 15 people. The bones had dissection marks made by surgical instruments and the skulls had marks made by a trepanning device.

A Revolutionary Mummy

Admiral John Paul Jones (1747-1792) was a legendary Scottish seaman and war hero who fought in the American Revolution and is considered a founder of the United States Navy. He inflicted significant damage to British forces along the coast of Nova Scotia, and led raids on

the British along the coasts of Ireland and England.

On July 18, 1792 John Paul Jones died in his Paris apartment. Gouverneur Morris, the American ambassador to France at the time, had an intense dislike for Jones and refused to pay for his burial. Luckily Jones had an admirer in Pierrot Francois Simmoneau, who donated the money for his funeral expenses.

The mummified remains of Admiral John Paul Jones. Image credit: USNI.org

The mummified remains of Admiral John Paul Jones. Image credit: USNI.org

Jones was buried in the Protestant section of the Saint Louis Cemetery because of his Scottish Calvinist background. His body was preserved in alcohol and interred in a lead coffin, which was in turn placed in a wooden coffin, so that his body would be preserved and easily identified when the U.S. claimed Jones' remains. However, four years later France's revolutionary government sold the cemetery property and all of the bodies buried there were forgotten.

In 1899 General Horace Porter, the U.S. Ambassador to France 1897-1905, and a team of researchers started a six- year investigation for the remains of Admiral John Paul Jones. This was a deeply personal search for Porter because in his own words, "I felt a deep sense of humiliation as an American citizen in realizing that our first and most fascinating naval hero had been lying for more than a century in an unknown and forgotten grave..."

The team discovered the site of Saint Louis Cemetery's Protestant section and unearthed Jones' lead coffin in 1905. On April 7, 1905, Jones' remains were positively identified during a post-mortem examination. The research team determined that the mummified body belonged to a man who was between 40 and 50 years old, and was about 5'7" inches tall, all of which was consistent with Jones at the time of his death. The body was clothed in a linen shirt, and his long brown hair, about 30 inches long, was covered in a linen cap that was monogrammed with the letters "J" and "P." Jones's body was immediately transported back to the U.S. aboard the USS *Brooklyn*.

On April 24, 1906, Jones's coffin was installed at the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, MD. On January 26, 1913, the Admiral's remains were re-interred in an ornate bronze and marble sarcophagus in the Naval Academy Chapel.

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For over a century, mysterious lights were seen bobbing up and down along the railroad tracks near Maco Station, a few miles west of Wilmington. When anyone approached the lights, they would disappear. The lights were observed many times over many years, and even photographed on occasion. It's even said that President Grover Cleveland saw the lights while on whistle stop tour in 1889. The source of these lights has never been determined, but according to legend the light is the ghost of a railroad worker who died on the tracks one night in 1867.

On that tragic night in 1867, a train was rolling along the tracks and the signalman, Joe Baldwin, was sleeping in the caboose. Joe's slumber was broken by a violent jerk. A veteran railroad worker, Joe Baldwin recognized the motion and immediately knew that the caboose had become detached from the rest of the train.

Joe Baldwin's heart started racing. He knew that his one car was now stuck on the tracks, and that the main part of the train was rapidly moving away from him and he had no way of contacting it. Joe also knew that his wasn't the only train scheduled for those tracks that night. A passenger train was due along soon, and if the oncoming train struck the stalled caboose there would be a horrible accident.

Joe Baldwin had a choice to make. He knew that he had to signal the oncoming train to stop. He knew that the only way to do this and be sure the engineer in the approaching train would see the signal was to stand on the platform at the back of the caboose.

Joe Baldwin also knew that it takes a long time to stop a speeding train. Even if the engineer saw the light and stopped, there might be time to slow down enough to prevent a complete disaster, but the chances were good that the caboose was still about to be hit. And Joe Baldwin that if that happened, he didn't stand much of a chance of walking away from that crash.

Baldwin made the heroic choice. Grabbing his lantern, Joe Baldwin stood on the back of the caboose as the sound of an oncoming passenger train rumbled closer. Joe frantically waved his warning light, trying desperately to catch the attention f the engineer.

Joe's plan worked. The engineer of the oncoming train saw the light and pulled hard on his brakes. But the momentum of the tons of speeding steel kept the train moving, and the locomotive slammed into Joe's caboose. Joe's signals had worked. His bravery had prevented a more serious collision. But brave Joe Baldwin was decapitated in the crash.

Joe's head was thrown by the force of the accident into the murky swamps that surrounded the tracks. It was never found. His headless body was buried with hero's honors a week later.

Ever since that night, lights have been seen moving up and down the track around Maco. Sometimes it's only one light, sometimes it's two. People says that it's the ghost of Joe Baldwin, still searching for his missing head.

A Note About the Story

The Maco light was seen for over 100 years, but has not been seen since 1977. This was the year that the railroad tracks at Maco station were pulled up. Maco stands on top of a geological fault line. Some have speculated that the source of the lights was static electricity produced by the pressures of this fault building up along the tracks.

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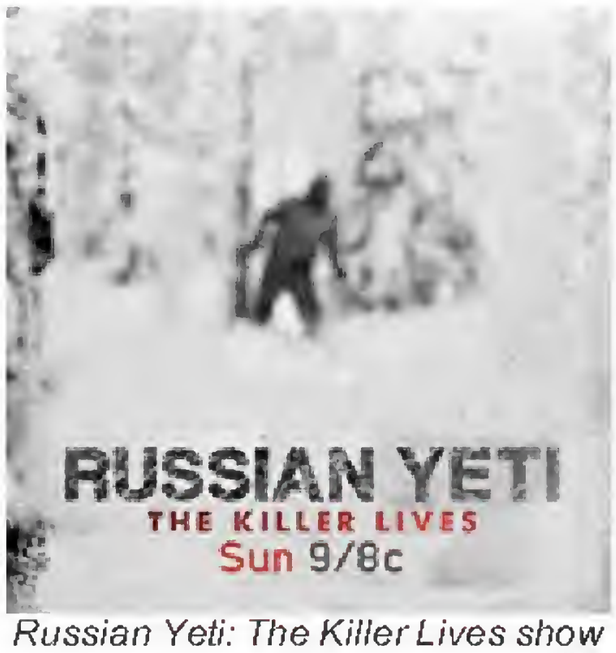
Discovery's Mountain of Mystery Mongering: The Mass Murdering Yeti - CSI

csicop.org

Volume 38.5, September/October 2014

A much-hyped two-hour Discovery Channel "documentary" aired on June 1, 2014. Titled *Russian Yeti: The Killer Lives*, the program delved into a decades-old pseudo-mystery known as the Dyatlov Pass incident in which nine Russian skiers died under unclear circumstances in the Ural Mountains.



Russian Yeti: The Killer Lives show title

The show was packed with dramatic "found footage" re-creations, dubious derring-do, a pulse-pounding score, and piles of speculation. Though not as blatantly hokey and contrived as the infamous pseudo-documentary Animal Planet program *Mermaids: The Body Found* (which fooled thousands of people, gave credence to the discredited "aquatic ape" theory, and spurred the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to put a note on their website debunking the existence of mermaids), it is nonetheless a textbook example of modern cable TV mystery-mongering and thus merits a closer look.

Here's the premise, from a press release for the show: "On February 2, 1959, nine college students hiked up the icy slopes of the Ural Mountains in the heart of Russia but never made it out alive. Investigators have never been able to give a definitive answer behind who—or what—caused the bizarre crime [sic] scene. Fifty-five years later, American explorer Mike Libecki reinvestigates the mystery—known as the Dyatlov Pass incident—but what he uncovers is truly horrifying. . . ."

Focusing on the undisputed facts in this case, we know that at some point on the night of February 1, 1959, after nearly a week of skiing, Igor Dyatlov led the group to cut slits in their tent and leave through the cut for the safety of the wooded area below, most of them wearing their underwear or a few scraps of clothing. After they failed to return, a rescue party was sent, and tracks were followed from the tent to the woods, where all the skiers were found, some of them many months later. According to the autopsies, the cause of death for all of them was hypothermia, or freezing to death. Four of the nine also had internal injuries, and one of them, Ludmila Dubinina, was missing her tongue and had additional injuries to her eyes. The biggest mysteries are why the group abandoned their tent (with their supplies and clothes inside), apparently in a hurry through a cut in the fabric, and what caused their injuries.

There are many elements and claims to the Dyatlov Pass story, and many theories including UFOs, top secret government conspiracies, and unusual natural phenomena. I won't be addressing those claims (in fact as we will see there's really no need to invoke those anyway) but instead will focus on the plausibility of the newest theory as promoted in the new Discovery Channel show: that a Yeti was responsible for the mass murder of nine Russians

in 1959.

The Group's Injuries

Russian Yeti: The Killer Lives begins with the premise that the injuries sustained by the skiers were so grave and extraordinary that they could only have been inflicted by an inhumanly strong creature. The show says that according to the autopsies, the hikers suffered "horrific injuries," including fractured ribs and a fractured skull attributed to a "compelling natural force" (in other words, some sort of blunt force trauma such as a fall or being crushed).

Unfortunately for the show, photographs of the dead hikers undermine most of the sensational claims. The photographs are crystal clear: the bodies were not "mutilated" at all. They were actually in fairly good shape for a party who had skied into the remote area, froze to death, and were discovered months later after exposure to the elements. Those who had cracked ribs were found at the bottom of a thirteen-foot ravine, and could have sustained the injuries falling into it or at some point after their death during the months before they were found, when buried by an avalanche or crushed by the weight of wet snow.

multiple photos of the Dyatlov party

Photographs of the Dyatlov party taken by rescue teams in 1959. Screen captures from the Discovery Channel program *Russian Yeti: The Killer Lives*.

Libecki makes much of how the bodies were found, for example, of those last to be found, "their bodies crouched and intertwined as of they had been hiding." The interpretation of their body positions "as if they had been hiding" suggests of course that they were hiding from something that would kill them—say, a pissed-off Yeti. However there's a much more likely explanation for why two bodies lost in a frozen wilderness might be found dead "crouched" together and entwined. It's a simple explanation that any fifth-grader can likely see but that apparently escaped world-renowned mountaineer Libecki: they were cold and lay together to conserve heat, as any novice hiker is taught to do. Maybe so, but what about the missing tongue?

The Missing Tongue

Mike Libecki says, "When I found out one of the students was missing a tongue immediately I knew this was not caused by an avalanche. Something ripped out the tongue of this woman." Skeptics will likely immediately recognize the logical fallacy Libecki employs, that the only possible explanation for Ludmila Dubinina's missing tongue is that "something ripped" it out of her mouth. How the woman's tongue was removed would be a question best answered by a medical doctor or a pathologist instead of a mountaineer, but Libecki gamely takes a guess: some powerful animal targeted and removed it. The show spends a lot of time on the mystery of the missing tongue because it is the lynchpin to bringing up the Yeti as an explanation for this mystery.

Here we can bring in the skeptical dictum of Ray Hyman's categorical imperative, which says

that before trying to explain something we should make sure there is something to explain; in other words, question your assumptions. For example, if there is a mundane, simple, and likely answer for why the tongue is missing, then we don't need to begin speculating about what may have taken her tongue, whether leprechauns, aliens, or Yeti.

blurry human-looking figure

An image—said to be of a mass-murdering Yeti—claimed to have been taken by a group of Russian skiiers who went missing in 1959. From the Discovery Channel program *Russian Yeti: The Killer Lives*.

As it happens, a tongue-eating Yeti—even assuming it exists—is by far the least likely explanation for a missing tongue. The "missing parts" aspect of this case is a familiar one to skeptics and has been invoked in countless other "unsolved" mysteries including the chupacabra, cattle mutilations, Satanic animal sacrifices, and aliens. Typically a mystery is mongered by those unfamiliar with—or who intentionally ignore—ordinary predation and decomposition. Lots of animals both big and small scavenge on the soft parts of dead bodies. If it was a tongue-hungry Yeti as Libecki suggests, why would it only have eaten one person's tongue when there were eight more nearby just ready for the ripping? Furthermore, the process of actually ripping out the woman's tongue would leave far greater injuries to Dubinina's mouth, jaw, and head than were found.

The Hikers Meet a Yeti?

We then move on to something about a found military boot cover, proving that the Russian military got to the Dyatlov scene before the rescuers did (opening the door to conspiracy theories, of course). Then, to what (to Libecki) appears to be a cryptic passage written in a newspaper the students brought with them to write on saying, "From now on we know that the snowmen exist." You might think that Libecki would want to consult the original document in order to independently authenticate such an apparently important clue, but he does not.

Libecki says, "The biggest question for me at this point is, why were the students so sure the Yeti exists?" But were the students actually "sure" the Yeti exists? Had Libecki looked at the original document, he would have seen that the students were not reporting an eyewitness sighting of a Yeti during their trip but instead making a joke. As a *Fortean Times* investigation noted, "Perhaps, though, we shouldn't read too much into this; it goes on to say: 'They can be met in the Northern Urals, next to Otorten mountain.' Given the humorous tone of the 'newspaper,' it's quite likely that the students were jokingly referring to themselves rather than recording a genuine sighting of an almasty [or Menk or Yeti]."

Thus the passage actually reads, "From now on we know that the snowmen exist. They can be met in the Northern Urals, next to Otorten mountain." Taken out of context as presented by Libecki it seems mysterious, but in context it's clearly a passing jest, akin to a Bigfoot buff mentioning in passing that he saw the creature at a gas station on the way to a forest to look for the beast. *Russian Yeti: The Killer Lives* and Mike Libecki would have us believe that the nine skiers had an encounter with a Yeti, which they not only saw and photographed but stalked. And yet none of the skiers mentioned anything else about the Yeti or their shock at having photographed the creature.

At the end of the show, after all the manufactured drama and running around, Mike Libecki admits that he found no real evidence that the Yeti exists, much less that it was responsible for the deaths of nine Russian skiers in 1959. "I did hear something strange," is the best he can muster, which is weak sauce indeed given the previous two hours of breathless claims about photographs of murderous tongue-ripping Yetis.

The one thing known for certain about the Dyatlov Pass incident is that the information about what happened is fragmentary and incomplete. There are many reasons for this, including that there were no eyewitnesses; the bodies were not recovered until months later; the Russian investigation may not have been as thorough as we'd like; it was during the Cold War, and so on. The issue is further clouded by a variety of mystery-mongering writers who have interpreted (and cherry-picked) information to promote their own theories and agendas, including conspiracy theorists, alien and UFO researchers, and others.

There is a simpler explanation for what may have happened to the group that addresses the main questions and doesn't invoke enraged, tongue-hungry Yetis, top secret Russian military conspiracies, or UFOs: they were caught in an avalanche. Svetlund Osadchuk and Kevin O'Flynn, writing in *Fortean Times*, note that several of those most familiar with the case have rejected wild theories and believe that ordinary events killed their friends.

My theory, for what it's worth, is that the group woke up in a panic on that fateful night and cut their way out of the tent either because an avalanche had covered the entrance to their tent or because they were scared that an avalanche was imminent and that was the fastest way for all of them to get out quickly—better to have a potentially reparable slit in a tent than risk being buried alive in it under tons of snow. They were poorly clothed because they had been sleeping, and they ran to the safety of the nearby woods where trees would help slow oncoming snow. In the darkness of night, they got separated into two or three groups; one group made a fire (hence the burned hands) while the others tried to return to the tent to recover their clothing, since the danger had apparently passed. But it was too cold, and they all froze to death before they could locate their tent in the darkness. At some point some of the clothes may have been recovered or swapped from the dead, but at any rate the group of four whose bodies were most severely damaged were caught in an avalanche and buried under thirteen feet of snow (more than enough to account for the "compelling natural force" the medical examiner described); Dubinina's tongue was likely removed by scavengers and ordinary predation.

We will, of course, never know what exactly happened, but it's likely that some variation of

this is the real explanation. The cause of the deaths of the skiers is not mysterious or "unknown" as is often suggested; it is in fact clear from the medical examiner's report: hypothermia, or freezing to death. There's really no reason to question the conclusion of the investigators who had firsthand access to all the available evidence at the time. Exactly what caused them to flee their tent can be speculated upon endlessly, but there's no reason to assume that anything unknown or mysterious caused it. In the absence of evidence one wild theory is as good as the next.

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The Max Headroom Incident - Who Forted? Magazine

By Dana Matthews on March 10, 2011 whofortedblog.com

On a late-November evening in 1987, two Chicago television stations were victims of a broadcast signal takeover.

After an earlier hijack attempt on WGN-9 during the 9:00 News, a broadcast on WTTW-11 of the *Doctor Who* episode "Horror of Fang Rock" would be interrupted by a man wearing a Max Headroom mask. The crazed person uttered mostly gibberish and bashed the Chicago Tribune and its subsidiaries, before he dropped his pants and was spanked by what appears to be a child. 90-seconds later, the program returned to normal. To this day, he remains at large.

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The New Nazi Hunt: War Crime Sleuths Now Turn to Islamist Terrorists

Dec 22, 2014 5:00 AM ET

bloomberg.com

By Del Quentin Wilber Dec 22, 2014 2:00 AM PT

Frank Hunter, a U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agent, is a key player in a little-known government effort to keep war criminals and human rights violators -- including those fighting in Syria or Iraq -- out of this country.

Frank Hunter, a U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agent, is a key player in a... Read More

Photographer: Andrew Harrer/Bloomberg

Frank Hunter, a U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agent, is a key player in a little-known government effort to keep war criminals and human rights violators -- including those fighting in Syria or Iraq -- out of this country.

Federal agent Frank Hunter grabbed a cup of coffee, sat down at his kitchen table and fired up his laptop computer to begin his daily hunt for modern-day war criminals.

It didn't take him long to come across a propaganda video posted by Islamic State. Hunter watched the slick 36-minute production on YouTube, grimacing at each execution and suicide bombing. Then he methodically captured photographs of the fighters, to be uploaded into facial-recognition databases that he hopes will stop the terrorists from ever coming to the U.S.

Hunter, a U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agent, is a key player in a little-known government effort to keep war criminals and human rights violators -- including those fighting in Syria or Iraq -- out of this country.

"It can be difficult," he said of watching the violent videos. "You can't do it every day or it messes with your head. But if what I'm doing now can prevent one of these guys from entering the United States, then that is a win."

Hunter, 53, is one of six ICE agents, three analysts, nine lawyers and three historians who work for the agency's Human Rights Violators and War Crimes Center, which operates out of a nondescript office park in Northern Virginia.

Photographer: Andrew Harrer/Bloomberg

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents have traditionally focused on government actors in atrocities, leaving terrorists to the Federal Bureau of Investigation. But the line separating the two, especially in places like Iraq and Syria, has blurred, said Mark Furtado.

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents have traditionally focused on... Read More

In the six years since the center was founded, it has helped ensure that the identities of more than 66,000 suspected human rights violators and war criminals were added to the databases used to stop them from getting visas. And it has blocked more than 150 from coming into the U.S., ranging from a suspect in a 1992 massacre in Sierra Leone to someone who tried to obstruct an investigation into the

murder of a Jesuit priest in El Salvador, said ICE agent Mark Furtado, the center's chief.

Islamic State

An increasing part of their focus is on the emerging threat posed by Islamic State and others fighting in Syria and Iraq. Though top U.S. officials, including Attorney General Eric Holder, say they are mostly focused on identifying and tracking U.S. citizens who have fought there, they are also wary of foreign fighters who might try to immigrate.

Hunter and other agents have already helped ban 250 war criminals operating in Iraq and Syria from ever entering the U.S.

The small center, which also houses a squad of FBI agents, was set up to better coordinate efforts to tackle the time-consuming task of investigating war criminals who had managed to hide their pasts while residing in this country.

Nazi Hunting

ICE agents have long specialized in such work, especially in tracking down Nazis. As the number of living Nazis dwindled, the agents turned their attention to people who committed atrocities in Latin America and the Balkans. Such investigations require months of work -- poring through records and interviewing victims -- and can take years to resolve in the courts.

A former Guatemalan special forces officer living in California, for example, was sentenced in February to 10 years in federal prison for covering up his role in a 1982 massacre that left almost 200 members of a village dead, including at least 67 children.

He was the fourth member of his unit to have been discovered by ICE agents in the U.S. after a painstaking review of Guatemalan records, and interviews with the violators and victims, according to ICE agents, analysts and historians.

In May, the latest in a string of Bosnians was nabbed by the agents. The man, the owner of a taxi company in Minnesota, was accused of lying on immigration forms to conceal his participation in war crimes in Bosnia to obtain his green card, which would allow him to live and work in the U.S.

Rwandan Genocide

Hunter, who is trim, has gray hair and wears wire-rimmed glasses, speaks in the measured tones of someone who has been in federal law enforcement for 26 years. He spent three of those in Africa, where he was helping investigate immigrants for suspected roles in the Rwandan genocide of 1994. That required examinations of records, as well as in-depth interviews of victims and their assailants.

“You identified with the victims quite a bit,” he said. “But the hard thing for me was interviewing perpetrators. They were released into the same communities as the families of their victims. You talked to them, and heard what they did -- cutting people with machetes -- and then when they were done they shook your hands like they were your best friend.”

“You don’t get used to that,” he said.

New Skills

More recently, the agent's approach to fighting war criminals has evolved. While he and his colleagues still conduct time-consuming historical investigations, they are also learning a new set of skills -- to scour the Internet for evidence of contemporary crimes. Some of the misdeeds are captured on video by victims or news organizations, others by boastful perpetrators in their propaganda releases.

The agents hope to identify the criminals and prevent them from getting visas, but they are also cataloging the evidence in case some slip through the security net. "We are essentially building time capsules," Furtado said.

On occasion, Furtado said, the work can feel overwhelming because "I have never seen this many hotspots at one time before."

ICE agents have traditionally focused on government actors in atrocities, leaving terrorists to the Federal Bureau of Investigation. But the line separating the two, especially in places like Iraq and Syria, has blurred, said Furtado, 50.

"Two years ago," he said, "there seemed to be a definite separation between a terrorist and human rights violator" acting on behalf of a government.

"But today's terrorist is tomorrow's human rights violator," he said, "or it could be the other way around."

Hunter has watched many of Islamic State's propaganda videos, including one that showed the beheading in August of 40-year-old American journalist James Foley. The films are deeply disturbing, particularly one "of captured soldiers who were made to lie on the ground and one after the other beheaded," he said.

"The perpetrators would take the severed head and kick it or place it in front of those still alive, and seemed to take great pleasure in doing so," he added.

Though gruesome, Hunter said the work can be gratifying: "I'm looking forward," he said, "not back."

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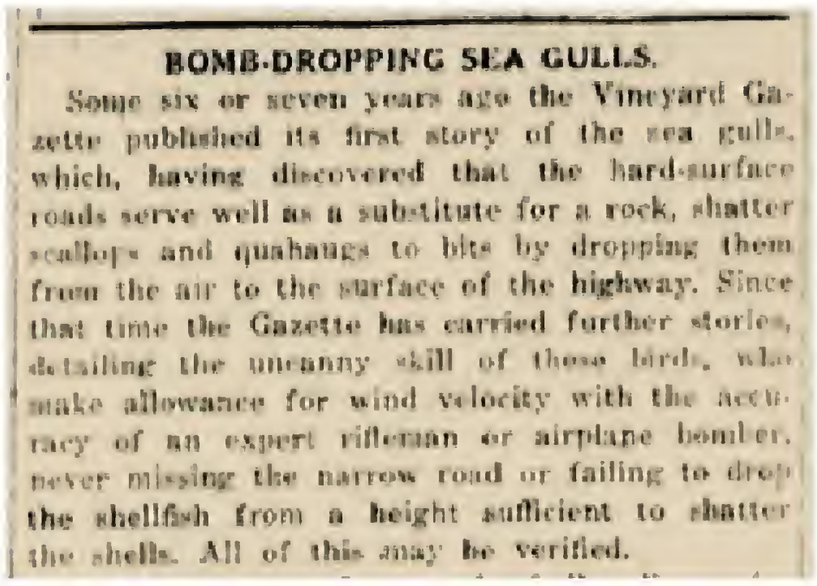
God Save the Queen —-The Punt Gun Salutes of Cowbit, Lincolnshire,

peashooter85
December 26th 2014, 5:30:40 pm

Punt guns were essentially large bore shotguns, typically 6, 4, or even 2 gauge in caliber. In the 19th century they were used for duck and goose hunting, no kidding. They were mounted on boats, and the hunter would use them to kill whole flocks at a time while they were in the water. These weren't your ordinary hunters, but commercial hunters or "market hunters", who would hunt game for a profit selling the meat and down to companies. The age of the punt gun came to an end when governments enacted laws restricting or banning market hunting. Today punt guns are little more than rare collectibles.

In Cowbit, Lincolnshire, England an old tradition has arisen involving punt guns. On Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee the hunters of the town fired off a volley from their punt guns in celebration. Since then, the people of Cowbit have fire their punt guns at every coronation and jubilee since. Today, the tradition is still strong as these punt guns were passed down to continue the tradition. Often, these old firearms had replacement stocks and part, or are fired with special safety stocks —- after all, these guns sure give a strong kick. However, they are the same old punt gun used by their forefathers generations past. Since punt gun ammunition has been produced in a hundred years, specialty ammunition has to be made for those that aren't muzzleloaders.



BOMB-DROPPING SEA GULLS.

Some six or seven years ago the Vineyard Gazette published its first story of the sea gulls, which, having discovered that the hard-surface roads serve well as a substitute for a rock, shatter scallops and quahaugs to bits by dropping them from the air to the surface of the highway. Since that time the Gazette has carried further stories, detailing the uncanny skill of these birds, who make allowance for wind velocity with the accuracy of an expert rifleman or airplane bomber, never missing the narrow road or failing to drop the shellfish from a height sufficient to shatter the shells. All of this may be verified.

Seagulls have learned that they can break open quahaugs (hard-shelled clams) by dropping them from great heights onto hard surfaces such as roads or rocks. This is a well-documented behavior. But in 1932, the *Vineyard Gazette* reported that seagulls at Martha's Vineyard had learned an even more remarkable trick. They were killing rats by deliberately dropping quahaugs on them, and then feasting on the dead rats.

As reported by the *Vineyard Gazette*:

> Soaring aloft with a heavy quahaug in their beaks, they mount to an unusual height, and hovering and shifting their position, gauging the wind and drift to a nicety, they drop the shellfish with a precision that almost never fails to connect with the rodent below, knocking it unconscious or killing it outright on the spot, whereupon the gulls descend and feast on fresh meat.

The paper added that these "bomb-dropping gulls" were the first ever to be reported, and noted that "army aviators may pick up some valuable hints by studying these birds and their methods."

This unusual avian behavior gained wide coverage in the media. However, as Curtis MacDougall noted in Hoaxes

(his classic 1940 study of hoaxes and "deliberately concocted untruth"), the story seems highly suspicious. While it's possible that some rats had accidentally been killed by quahaugs falling from the sky, the idea that the gulls were purposefully aiming the shellfish at the rodents stretches credibility. At the very least, it's definitely not a behavior that has ever been reported elsewhere.

MacDougall offered the story as the kind of tall tale that was frequently run by small newspapers, with the goal of boosting local tourism by getting the name of the town or region reported in papers nationwide. Such stories were rarely questioned because, wrote MacDougall, "the average person scans his newspaper indifferently and doesn't ponder over the plausibility of an unusual item which has no personal effect upon him."

SEA GULLS EXPERT IN AERIAL CRAFT
Could Give Pointers to Army Aviators

Some six or seven years ago the Vineyard Gazette published its first story of the sea gull, which, having discovered that the hard-surfaced roads serve well as a substitute for a rock, shatter scallops and quahaugs to bits by dropping them from the air to the surface of the

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highway. Since that time the Gazette has carried further stories, detailing the uncanny skill of these birds, who made allowance for wind velocity with the accuracy of an expert rifleman or airplane bomber, never missing the narrow road or failing to drop the shellfish from a height sufficient to shatter the shells. All of this may be verified.

Other newspapers have made similar discoveries about gulls in various places, and it has become quite the seasonable thing for them to carry an account of the activiites of these natural sky riders whenever the shellfish are easily obtainable and attract the birds. But the Gazette now presents a new angle on the Vineyard seagulls, together with the solution of a mystery that has for long been a puzzle to islanders.

For several years it has been noticed by passersby on the Edgartown-oak Bluffs road that in the vicinity of Anthiers Bridge there are apt to be found the mortal remains of large rats at very frequent intervals. Where they come from, or what causes their death, has been a subject for discussion, as in many cases the carcasses are found where the wheels of passing cars could not have struck them, and moreover, they always bear the appearance of having been more or less mangled and torn. It has remained for Capt. Chester Robinson to solve the mystery, which the Gazette now publishes.

According to the captain, who is well versed in natural history, and has spent much time in observing the activities of sea birds, the ordinary sea gull is fond of rats and mice. The remains of shellfish, scattered along the road in this locality, act as bait, attracting these rodents from long distances. They hide in the beach grass when cars or pedestrians approach, but when the highway is clear they will scamper about the road, eating the fragments of scallop or quahaug that they find in the emptied shells.

At this juncture the highly efficient gulls get in their skilled and deadly work. Soaring aloft with a heavy quahaug in their beaks, they mount to an unusual height, and hovering and shifting their position, gauging the wind and drift to a nicety, they drop the shellfish with a precision that almost never fails to connect with the rodent below, knocking it unconscious or killing it outright on the spot, whereupon the gulls descend and feast on fresh meat.

The Vineyard may justly claim the first actual bomb-dropping gulls ever to be reported to date, and army aviators may pick up some valuable hints by studying these birds and their methods.

[Text of the Vineyard Gazette's article, as reprinted in *The Waterloo Press* - June 9, 1932]
Animals
Posted by The Curator on *Fri Dec 26, 2014*

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Stacy Conradt

We all know about Paul Bunyan and Babe the Blue Ox - especially if you grew up in Minnesota, where images and statues of the gigantor lumberjack and his cobalt companion are as common as the Golden Arches and Starbucks. But how about the axehandle hound? I bet a few of you are familiar, but there is some folklore out there that isn't quite as, um, huge, as Paul and Babe. Here are 10 of them.

1. The Axehandle Hound. Haven't you always wondered where those unattended axe heads go? Like pens in your cubicle, those things seem to walk off of their own accord. But they don't - it's really the work of the axehandle hound. As you can see, it looks like a dog and subsists on a diet solely made up of blades and handles. You are what you eat, right? It seems that the axehandle hound is found mostly in Minnesota and Wisconsin.

2. The Fur-Bearing Trout. Yes. There are two ways this furry fish supposedly came about: either the rivers in the area in question (usually Colorado, Montana, Canada, Wyoming and the Great Lakes) are so cold that the trout grew hair to adapt, or a shipment of hair tonic was dumped into the Arkansas River and resulted in the oddity. Those stories are bunk, obviously, but at least the story has some basis: a mold called Saprolegnia sometimes infects fish, and a lot of the infection does kind of look like masses of white hair. But in reality, it's just mold. I think that might be grosser than hair, actually.

3. The Hoop Snake. This guy dates all the way back to at least 1784, when it was mentioned in a book called *Tour in the U.S.A.*. Snakes are scary for some people to begin with, but when you imagine a snake that is intelligent enough to grasp its tail in its mouth and roll after prey quickly like a wheel, they get downright terrifying. Some versions of the legend say the snake rolls up on its victim incredibly fast, then straightens itself out at the last possible second and sinks its fangs in. The only way to escape the beast is to dodge at that last second, causing the fangs to sink into a tree instead. Despite a $10,000 reward offered for anyone who could produce physical evidence of a hoop snake, one has never actually been brought in.

4. The snallygaster, according to folklore, is a dragon sort of a creature that lives in the Blue Ridge Mountains in Maryland. He (or she, I suppose) dates way back to the 1700s, when the German immigrants there spotted a beast and referred to it as "schneller Geist," which is a word used to describe a fast-moving spirit responsible for slamming doors and sudden gushes of air. The German word eventually evolved into "Snallygaster" "“ you can see it, can't you? Reports started appearing in the *Middletown Valley Register* in 1909; it was even rumored at the time that Teddy Roosevelt himself was interested in hunting the thing. He popped back up again in the Prohibition Era, when more accounts of loud, strange screeches from the Blue Ridge Mountains surfaced. These days, snallygaster is sometimes used as a generic term for something scary, kind of like the bogeyman. To me, it sounds like something Roald Dahl would have come up with.

5. The teakettler is perhaps the feline counterpart of the axehandle hound. Also located in Minnesota and Wisconsin, this little guy is a mix of cat and dog, walks backwards, and emits

a sound like a boiling tea kettle for a meow (or a howl). Oh, and steam does, in fact, pour out of its mouth when it makes this noise. They're very shy, so few first-hand accounts of the creature have ever been recorded, but lumberjacks know that whenever they hear a boiling teapot in an improbable place for an actual pot of tea, it's definitely the teakettler.

6. The Squonk is another Pennsylvania native that sounds like it would easily fit into the *Harry Potter* world. It's a nasty looking thing "“ droopy skin covered in warts and boils. It's aware of its horrible appearance, though, and spends a majority of its time crying and hiding from the prying public eye. If caught, it simply dissolves into a puddle of tears.
7. The splintercat is always in a bad mood due to the constant headache it has from breaking trees open with its skull. You'd be a bit cranky too! Legend has it that to get access to bees and their honey, the cat flies through the air and rams the tree, knocking branches off, withering parts of it and splitting it through to the core in some places. It resides mainly in the Pacific Northwest; there's even a creek named after it in Oregon. Even Julie Andrews knows about the splintercat "“ she wrote a children's book called *The Last of the Really Great Whangdoodles* that featured a splintercat who belonged to the Prime Minister of Whangdoodleland.

8. The Joint Snake. If you thought the Hoop Snake was a bit fearsome, this one is worse. You can try to kill it by chopping it into pieces, but it's just going to reassemble itself like the T-1000. In fact, if you cut it up and then leave the knife you used sitting next to the piece, it will be sucked up into the regeneration and become part of the snake. I bet even Samuel L. Jackson would even cower to a knife-wielding snake. However, there may be a little nugget of truth to this one "“ likely, people have seen a type of legless lizard called the Glass lizard (so called because they are easily "broken") that can drop their tails off when a predator attacks. The tail then breaks into pieces and continues moving to distract the predator while the real lizard makes a hasty escape. Ummm"¦ creepy. Cool, but creepy.

9. The Wild Haggis proves it's not just Americans who make up silly creatures. The Haggis scoticus is, well, what a haggis looks like before it's caught and prepared. It looks somewhat like a cross between a badger, a skunk and a long-haired dog, apparently. Some "reports" say that the wild haggis has legs that are longer on one side of the body than the other, making for quick movement but only in one direction. The side of the body varies, though. The Wild Haggis is native to the Scottish Highlands.

10. The Wapaloosie is another lumberjack tale (I'm getting the impression that they needed to amuse themselves a lot). It lives in Pacific Coast forests and can get as far east as northern Idaho. It's about the size of a wiener dog, but has the feet and toes of a woodpecker, which helps it grip tree trunks so it can climb them like an inchworm to eat fungus.

Of course, you've also got the jackalope, the hodag and the Wampus Cat, but I figured those are more well-known than these (especially since the hodag and the Wampus Cat are sports mascots). Got any other obscure folklore creatures? Let's hear "˜em! After all, we need to know what to watch for"¦

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Misidentifying your monster can have dire consequences, up to and including being eaten, dismembered, or possessed when your offensive strategies turn out to not only be culturally inappropriate, but also ineffective. If you mistake a basilisk for a dragon, forsake a mirror, and wade in boldly waving your broadsword, you wind up turned to stone. Assuming that the hairy hominid wandering the forests of Washington State is a reasonably benign Basque *Basa-Juan* is a recipe for a crushed skull. Tossing holy water on something that isn't demonic just pisses it off. Don't even get me started on staking the wrong organ or neglecting the double-tap to the brainpan when faced with zombie hordes. Basically, any monster hunter worth his rock salt will tell you that you've got to know the cultural rules. This is particularly true with harbingers of death. One looks pretty silly wrapping up their affairs and giving away their worldly possessions if you're kicking it old school in Germany and a black cat crosses your path from left to right (everyone knows that your Teutonic feline goes right to left when warning you of impending doom; left to right signals imminent prosperity). Plus, it's hard to get your stuff back. You see, while our species has a whole set of generalized fears including extinction (ceasing to exist), mutilation, loss of autonomy, separation, and ego-death, the character of these fears is culturally embedded, and thus monsters as symbolic expressions of those fears, can be somewhat ethnocentric. For example, being of Middle Eastern extraction, I am slightly wary of the potential for a theriomorphic Arabian Hâmah bird bent on vengeance making an appearance. Certainly the possibility is remote, as my dastardly deeds are limited mostly to unkind thoughts, rather than murder. On the other hand, I find myself relatively unconcerned that a horse-headed Filipino *Tikbalang* is lurking in the woods behind my house. Perhaps this is unnecessarily short-sighted, but we tend to play the odds. As I regard my research into those things that are likely to usher in our destruction as a public service, I was deeply concerned when I discovered that for the past 300 years or so, we have been mistakenly assuming that the mournful critter which has reputedly announced the impending death of every Baron Rossmore dating back to Robert Cuninghame, 1st Baron Rossmore (1726–1801) was a traditional banshee, when in fact it was more likely to be a Dutch *Witte wieven* ("White Lady").

The Rossmores of Ireland's County Monaghan have a complex lineage. Scottish General Robert Cuninghame, 1st Baron of Rossmore, son of Colonel David Cuninghame, and his wife Margaret Callander of Craigforth served as British Army Commander-in-Chief of Ireland from 1793 to 1796, but married Elizabeth Murray, a close relative through marriage of the Westenra family, and as she and Robert died childless, the Baron of Rossmore title passed to her nephew Warner William Westenra, who would become the 2nd Baron Rossmore. The Westenra family (and hence, every Rossmore after Robert Cuninghame) were not actually Irish (Celtic, that is). William Westerna (died 1676), grandfather of the 2nd Baron Rossmore had actually emigrated to Dublin in the mid-17th Century from Holland, but became heavily involved in local politics, representing Maryborough in the Irish Parliament. True, Robert Cuninghame was indeed a red-blooded Scot and thus ostensibly a Celt, although not Irish, but the catch is that Banshees are very particular, and sticklers for tradition. Your basic banshee (or *Bean Sidhe*) originates in the Gaelic mythology of Scotland and Ireland, and is essentially a fairy that wails mournfully when somebody is about to die. This is in keeping

with the traditional Gaelic funerary custom of having a "keener" woman sing a lament at the graveside. Folklore has it that if you were a member of one of the "great" Gaelic families (O'Gradys, the O'Neills, the Ó Longs, McCnaimhíns, Ó Briains, Ó Conchobhairs, and the Caomhánachs), your funeral keening would be done by a fairy woman. Of course, you might have met your unfortunate demise far from home, but fairies are a presentient lot, so the fairy assigned to your family might just start wailing away before the folks got the news. Presto, you've got the banshee that warns you of an impending death in the works. Rank hath its privileges after all.

Of course, this presents a problem, as the original Rossmore was not descended from one of the great Gaelic clans. In a story heralded as a classic in banshee folklore, the death of Robert Cuninghame, 1st Baron of Rossmore was announced to his close family friend and judge Sir Jonah Barrington (incidentally something of a vagabond, who himself died in Paris, France in an attempt to avoid his creditors, and is unique in having been removed from the judiciary by a unanimous act of both houses of the Irish Parliament). During an impromptu visit to County Monaghan, Barrington and his wife were treated to a visit from a banshee proclaiming the death of the 1st Baron of Rossmore, which Barrington recorded in his popular memoirs.

This intimacy at Mount Kennedy gave rise to an occurrence the most extraordinary and inexplicable of my whole existence, an occurrence which for many years occupied my thoughts and wrought on my imagination. Lord Rossmore was advanced in years, but I never heard of his having had a single day's indisposition. He bore in his green old age the appearance of robust health. During the viceroyalty of Earl Hardwick, Lady Barrington, at a drawing—room at Dublin Castle, met Lord Rossmore. He had been making up one of his weekly parties for Mount Kennedy, to commence the next day, and had sent down orders for every preparation to be made. The Lord-Lieutenant was to be of the company. "My little farmer," said he to Lady Barrington, addressing her by a pet name, "when you go home, tell Sir Jonah that no business is to prevent him from bringing you down to dine with me tomorrow. I will have no ifs in the matter—so tell him that come he must!" She promised positively, and on her return informed me of her engagement, to which I at once agreed. We retired to our chamber about twelve, and towards two in the morning I was awakened by a sound of a very extraordinary nature. I listened; it occurred first at short intervals, it resembled neither a voice nor an instrument, it was softer than any voice, and wilder than any music, and seemed to float in the air. I don't know wherefore, but my heart beat forcibly; the sound became still more plaintive, till it almost died away in the air, when a sudden change, as if excited by a pang, changed its tone ; it seemed descending. I felt every nerve tremble: it was not a natural sound, nor could I make out the point from whence it came. At length I awakened Lady Barrington, who heard it as well as myself ; she suggested that it might be an Eolian harp; but to that instrument it bore no similitude—it was altogether a different character of sound. My wife at first appeared less affected than I, but subsequently she was more so. We now went to a large window in our bed-room which looked directly upon a small garden underneath; the sound seemed then obviously to ascend from a grass-plot immediately below our window. It continued; Lady Barrington requested that I would call up her maid, which I did, and she was

evidently more affected than either of us. The sounds lasted for more than half an hour. At last a deep, heavy, throbbing sigh seemed to issue from the spot, and was shortly succeeded by a sharp but low cry, and by the distinct exclamation, thrice repeated, of " Rossmore—Rossmore—Rossmore I" I will not attempt to describe my own feelings, indeed I cannot. The maid fled in terror from the window, and it was with difficulty I prevailed on Lady Barrington to return to bed; in about a minute after, the sound died gradually away until all was silent. Lady Barrington, who is not so superstitious as I, attributed this circumstance to a hundred different causes, and made me promise that I would not mention it next day at Mount Kennedy, since we should be thereby rendered laughingstocks. At length, wearied with speculations, we fell into a sound slumber. About seven the ensuing morning a strong rap at my chamber-door awakened me. The recollection of the past night's adventure rushed instantly upon my mind, and rendered me very unfit to be taken suddenly on any subject. It was light; I went to the door, when my faithful servant, Lawler, exclaimed on the other side, "O Lord, sir!" "What is the matter?" said I hurriedly. "O sir" ejaculated he, "Lord Rossmore's footman was running past the door in great haste, and told me in passing that my lord, after coming from the castle, had gone to bed in perfect health, but that about half-after two this morning his own man hearing a noise in his master's bed—he slept in the same room—went to him, and found him in the agonies of death, and before he could alarm the other servants all was over." I conjecture nothing. I only relate the incident as unequivocally matter of fact. Lord Rossmore was absolutely dying at the moment I heard his name pronounced (Barrington, 1876, p336-337).

This presentiment of Rossmore's demise, decidedly creepy as it was, was characterized as a typical banshee manifestation, but there are a number of problems with such a designation. Banshees are all about the incomprehensible wailing. It's their trademark. They aren't traditionally as charitable as to actually intelligibly whisper the name of who they are moaning about. That would ruin the sense of mystery. Obviously, the other problem is that Rossmore was Scottish, not Irish, and decidedly not of one of the Gaelic families to which banshees are restricted to. One early 20th Century folklorist noted the problematic appellation, but was willing to give a little leeway, assuming that a Celt is a Celt is a Celt, whether Scottish or Irish (although he too objected to the banshee identification, commenting "The question that most concerns me is whether they were due to the Banshee or not, and as Lord Rossmore was not apparently of ancient Irish lineage, I am inclined to think the phenomena owed its origin to some other class of phantasm; perhaps to one that had been attached to Lord Rossmore's family in Scotland. Moreover, I have never heard of the Banshee speaking as the invisible presence spoke on that occasion; the phenomena certainly seems to me to be much more Scottish than Irish" (O'Donnell, 1920, p79). Perhaps there are rogue Scottish banshees that refuse to adhere to the Banshee Code of Ethics, but the fact that rumors abound that every Baron Rossmore's death has been preceded by a banshee caterwaul puts the nail in the coffin so to speak, as after the first Baron Rossmore, every subsequent Baron has been from the Dutch side of the family. Even the 5th Baron Rossmore, Derrick Warner William Westenra (1853-1921) acknowledged the family "banshee", although unwisely chose to (1) identify it as a banshee, and (2) express his personal disdain for the creature.

The banshee has been fairly active from time to time since then, and although personally I don't care for the family spectre, it is firmly believed in by the country folk, and it would require a bold "bhoy" to walk after dark past a certain wood which is popularly supposed to be its stronghold. What I cannot disbelieve, however, is the Harrington episode, which is one of the least known but best authenticated of Irish ghost stories (Rossmore, 1912, p6).

Someone should probably inform the current and 7th Baron Rossmore, William Warner Westenra and his heir apparent Benedict William Westenra that rather than keeping their ears open and listening for the banshee cry, they need to watch for a Dutch *Witte wieven.* This is an exceedingly important distinction, as you generally can't negotiate with a banshee. Somebody is going to die and a banshee commences wailing. On the other hand, with *Witte wieven*, you might just be able to cut a deal. Historically, Germanic paganism closely associated with Dutch folkloric traditions held that when "wise women" (herbalists, healers, seers, and witches) died, their spirits lingered and could be appealed to for help, and just like the banshee, their powers of prognostication were thought to contribute to their undead ability to act as a harbinger of death. Neither the banshee or the *Witte wieven* is thought to actually cause the death of the unfortunate soul in question; rather they simply know it's coming. The difference is, if you ask a *Witte wieven* nicely they might just intercede on your behalf. That seems like an extremely relevant distinction, should one of them have attached themselves to your family. The object lesson is that we should not rush to judgment as to what genus of monster we are facing. Unless of course it's about to eat you. Then, by all means, rush to judgment. Though, if you have the time, check your genealogies, confirm your culture, and take the measure of your monster. You can thereby avoid a lot of heartache, sidestep any unpleasant rending and tearing, and steal yourself a few more years on this mortal coil. As gunfighter Wyatt Earp said, "Fast is fine, but accuracy is everything".

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The Saints of Fort Ross

09.12.2014 english.pravda.ru

By Daniel J. Demers

One came by schooner, and then horseback. Two came by steam locomotive, and then stagecoach. Holy men on a mission-they came, they prayed and departed. Their presence at Fort Ross, Russian colony turned California State Park, is exceptional. It is the only public park in the United States that has been graced by three saints. In a sense, Fort Ross is a kind of hallowed ground.

St Innocent

The Saints of Fort Ross. 54114.png

Ioann Veniaminov, a 39 year old Russian Orthodox priest, departed Sitka, Alaska onboard a Russian schooner on July 1, 1836. Alaska was then a Russian colony. On the second day at sea, Veniaminov related in his journal, "we received a tailwind and the weather was good. The weather stayed with us all the way and was so favorable that we raced across a distance of 150 to 200 miles per day." Fifteen days later he disembarked at Bodega Bay, California and spent the next five hours on horseback riding at "a moderate gait." When he arrived at Fort Ross that July afternoon, he had traveled 1,100 miles.

Veniaminov, who spent five weeks at the fort, was only the second Orthodox prelate to visit the colony since its founding in 1812. While there he celebrated the liturgy and gave communion, performed and blessed marriages, heard confessions, baptized and taught religion prepatory to the various sacraments. He blessed the stream and the fort. He liked Fort Ross, admitting "the healthful air, the pure blue sky, the geographical position and native vegetation struck and captivated" him. Although he was disappointed with the chapel which he found "rather plain."

He was an inquisitive man "full of scientific curiosity, observant, tireless and exact in collecting data." He was also a gifted linguist. He left Fort Ross by horse, traveling to San Francisco. He spent another two weeks in the San Francisco Bay Area, visiting and befriending Catholic padres at four Franciscan missions (San Rafael, San Francisco's Mission Dolores, San Jose and Santa Clara.). It took 30 days to sail back to Sitka.

Back in Alaska he took the time to use his mechanical skills, building two small pipe organs which he donated to two of the California missions he had visited (San Jose and Santa Clara)- "a rare gesture of ecumenical goodwill for the time."

In 1841-the same year the Russians abandoned Fort Ross-Father Veniaminov was made Bishop of Kamchatka and the Kuril Islands of Russia and the Alaskan Aleutian Islands. As is the custom in the Russian Orthodox Church, he chose the Bishopric name of Innocent. In

1850 he was elevated to Archbishop and in 1869 was appointed Metropolitan of Moscow, the highest rank in the Russian Orthodox Church. He died in 1879 at the age of 82. He was canonized a saint in 1977.

Blessed Dabovich

The Saints of Fort Ross. 54115.png

Jovan Dabovich was born in San Francisco in 1863 to Serbian immigrant parents. He was ordained an Orthodox priest in 1892. He was the first American to be ordained an Orthodox priest. Upon ordination he took the name Sebastian. In 1897 the young priest accompanied his Bishop Nicholas Ziorov on a trip from San Francisco to Fort Ross. The trip included a ferry boat ride from San Francisco to Sausalito, California. There the clerics boarded a train which took them over the coastal range along Tamales Bay, California and inland to Cazadero, California. From Cazadero they took a stagecoach up Fort Ross Road. The entire trek from San Francisco took about fifteen hours.

Bishop Ziorov has left us an accurate account of the trip and his impressions. They only spent a day and a night at the Fort. Like St. Innocent, he enjoyed the trip and surroundings; "Such air, such nature, an enchantment!" he wrote. He gasped when he caught his first sight of the fort: "It stands on a hillock as if in the (palm) of God's hand above the ocean."

Ziorov and Dabovich were disappointed with the condition of the chapel and cemetery, both of which had degraded significantly in the fifty odd years since the colony was abandoned by the Russians. The chapel, in disrepair, had been turned into a barn for animals. When they visited the cemetery they saw further disrepair with "only insignificant remains" of unkempt graves. Dabovich "emotionally" performed an Orthodox religious rite over the cemetery graves- "with difficulty he pronounced the prayers." Ziorov expressed anger at "the desolating sacrilege in a holy place." Dabovich wrote in the Fort Ross Hotel Register, "I have had the honor to visit this place and pray in the old cemetery yonder on the hill." He laments that he couldn't pray in the chapel "which is now a house of cattle."

Dabovich had an interesting religious career after his visit to Fort Ross. He spent time in Minnesota, returned to San Francisco and organized the first Serbian Orthodox church in Jackson, California. Later he spent time in Alaska, Chicago and New Jersey. In 1914 he became a chaplain in the Serbian Army and after World War I served the remainder of his life in Yugoslavia. He died there in 1940 at the age of 77. In 2007 his remains were unearthed in Serbia and brought back to California. They were reinterred at St. Sava Church in Jackson. He is currently being considered for Canonization as a Saint in the Orthodox Church. If and when "sainted," he will be the first American so honored in the Russian Orthodox Church.

St. Tikhon

Basil Belavin was born in Russia in 1865. He was ordained a Russian Orthodox priest in 1891, taking the name Tikhon. He was consecrated a bishop in 1897. In 1898 he was

promoted to head the Orthodox Church in North America. Well liked, he was made an honorary citizen of the United States in 1900.

The Saints of Fort Ross. 54116.png

Bishop Tikhon visited Fort Ross in 1905 with Father Theodore Pashkovsky. The duo was pleasantly surprised to find the Chapel had been returned to a religious theme. Father Pashkovsky commented on "the cleanness of the chapel." "Gone was "the desolation of a holy place", as Bishop Nikolai had commented only eight years before. The improvements had resulted from the acquisition of the Fort by the State of California which turned it into a state park.

Like Bishop Nicholas and Father Dabovich, Bishop Tikhon and Father Pashkovsky spent the night at the Fort Ross Hotel and returned to San Francisco the following day.

He was reassigned to Russia in 1907 and in 1913 was assigned to the Bishopric of Lithuania. On 1917 on the eve of the Russian revolution he was elected to be Metropolitan of the Russian Orthodox Church. As the church's Patriot he was the highest ranking cleric of the church. During his tenure he witnessed the Great Russian Civil War and rise of the Communist Party which repressed the Church. The Soviets confiscated Church property and persecuted and imprisoned thousands of the clergy. Thousands of churches were forcibly closed by the Soviet government. Bishop Tikhon himself was imprisoned for over a year.

He died in Russia in 1925 at the age of 60. He was canonized a saint in 1989.

They Walked the Walk

In retrospect St. Innocent, Blessed Dabovich and St. Tikhon had their trips to Fort Ross in common with their sainthood. They all took the time to record their observations for posterity. Since 1900, hundreds of Orthodox clerics tens of thousands of believers and Russian citizens have visited the "rather plain" chapel perched on the promontory overlooking the mighty Pacific Ocean. The distinctive chapel has been repaired and rebuilt. The cemetery has been studied by scholars and partially reclaimed. In 1897, Bishop Ziorov observed that looking back from the cemetery towards the Fort was "a charming picture." He enjoyed the murmuring brook and open field "covered with a motley rug of green and flowers and the setting sun with slanted rays that gilded the ocean, the Fort, the forest and us." Amazingly, things haven't really changed much since then.

The Author acknowledges and thanks Mikhail Pashkov and Alex Liberovsky for their assistance.

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The Travel Channel show "Mysteries at the Museum" recently filmed an episode at the Salida Museum in Colorado, where they dug into the history of the fur-bearing trout.

Back in the late 1930s, a Salida resident, Wilbur Foshay (who was a bit of a con artist, as well as being a member of the Salida Chamber of Commerce), brought a lot of media attention to the town by claiming that fur-bearing trout could be found in the nearby Arkansas River. But he complained that the fur-bearing trout could never be caught because fishing wasn't allowed in Colorado rivers during January, when the fish was most active. So he was urging the Colorado Game and Fish Association to allow a special exception to allow fur-bearing trout fishing in January.

FISHING BAN MAY BE LIFTED TO CATCH FUR-BEARING TROUT

DENVER (Colo.) Jan. 9.-(U.P.) The Colorado Game and Fish Commission decided today to find out for sure if the Salida (Colo.) Chamber of Commerce was only fooling when it announced that fur-bearing trout swim in the near-by waters of the Arkansas River.

SEEKS PERMISSION

Otis E. McIntyre, secretary of the commission, said he will recommend that the commission grant official permission for a Salida angler to fish for a trout with a fur coat.

McIntyre's announcement came after Wilbur B. Foshay, secretary of the Salida Chamber complained that it was impossible under present game laws for the town to prove its story

CAUGHT IN JANUARY

Furry fin-flippers, Foshay said in a letter to McIntyre, can be caught only in January—when fishing is not permitted in Colorado streams.

"We appreciate it is out of season," Foshay wrote, "but there is nothing left but to try to get one of them."

McIntyre said that "when I first read of the fur-bearing trout I thought it was more or less of a joke."

"Perhaps there is something in the story," he said. "At any rate, it might be well to find out."

Los Angeles Times - Jan 10, 1939

The Pueblo Chieftain has some more details:

Foshay's story came complete with lots of details like the best bait to catch the fur-bearing trout was the "snow worm." He said those who tried to catch the fish had to have a special winter license specifically for fur-bearing trout.

The craze didn't stop with Foshay. One local musician, Ray Rainey, wrote a song about "Patricia" the fur-bearing trout.

Foshay had a taxidermist create two fur-bearing trout. One of them remains on display at the Salida Museum. The other is owned by the Mount Shavano Fish Hatchery.

The Pueblo Chieftain article includes a nice picture of Bob Campbell of the Salida Museum posing with their fur-bearing trout. And there's another picture of Campbell (with trout) posted at The Mountain Mail website.

But I should correct one detail in the *Pueblo Chieftain* article. It states that the fur-bearing trout was "a promotional story created by Wilbur Foshay." But Foshay didn't create the story. Tales of fur-

bearing trout were circulating long before the 1930s. Foshay simply took advantage of the legend of the fish to help promote Salida.

Folklore/Tall Tales

Posted by The Curator on *Mon Apr 14, 2014*

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From *Ghosts and Legends of Frederick County* by Timothy L. Cannon and Nancy F. Whitmore

Reports of a strange flying beast known as the Snallygaster first appeared in Frederick County in early February, 1909. The story was carried prominently in Middletown's *Valley Register*, a weekly newspaper, for about a month, when the story mysteriously died.

In the early issues, the flying beast seemed to be everywhere at once: New Jersey, West Virginia, Ohio, and *headed this way.*

It was reported to have created quite a stir in New Jersey, where its footprints were first discovered in the snow.

The first person to see it, James Harding, described it as having enormous wings, a long sharp beak, claws like steel, and one eye in the middle of its forehead. He said it made shrill screeching noises and looked like a cross between a tiger and a vampire.

A vampire may have been a good description, for it was reported to have killed a colored man, Bill Gifferson, by piercing his neck with its sharp bill and slowly sucking his blood.

It was also seen in West Virginia, where it almost caught a woman near Scrabble, roosted in Alex Crow's barn, and laid an egg near Sharpsburg, where it was reported some men had rigged up an incubator to try to hatch it.

T.C. Harbaugh, of Casstown, Ohio, wrote a letter to the *Valley Register* in early 1909, telling of a strange beast that flew over his area making terrible screeching noises. Harbaugh described it as having two huge wings, a large horny head, and a tail twenty feet long. He said it looked as though it was headed this way.

Sure enough, the Snallygaster was first sighted in Maryland by a colored man, who fired a brick-burning kiln near Cumberland. The strange beast was seen cooling its wings over the outlet of the kiln. When the beast's sleep was disturbed by the man, it emitted a blood-curdling scream and angrily flew away.

It was also shot at near Hagerstown, sighted south of Middletown at Lover's Leap, and seen flying over the mountains between Gapland and Burkittsville, where it was reported to have laid another egg – big enough to hatch an elephant.

Sightings of the Snallygaster were creating such a commotion that at one point it was reported that President Theodore Roosevelt might postpone a trip to Europe so that he could lead an expedition to capture it.

Apparently the Smithsonian Institute was also interested in the beast. From the description provided by engineer 83, at Shepherdstown, West Virginia, they determined the strange beast was either a bovalopus or a Snallygaster, since it had the characteristics of both.

Further, its hide was so rare that it was worth $100,000 a square foot, as it was the only substance known to man that could polish punkle shells.

(Punkle shells, for those of you who don't know, are used by the African tribes of Umbopeland for ornamentation.)

The last sighting in Frederick County in 1909 occurred near Emmitsburg in early March. Three men fought the terrible creature outside a railroad station for nearly an hour and a half before chasing it into the woods of Carroll County.

Twenty-three years passed before the Snallygaster appeared again in Frederick County. First reports were received from just below South Mountain in Washington County. Eyewitness accounts claimed that it flew toward them from the Middletown Valley.

The beast was often seen floating back and forth over the area and was described as being as large as a dirigible, with arms resembling the tentacles of an octopus. The creature appeared to be able to change its size, shape, and color at will.

Although the creature made no attempt to harm any of the residents of the Valley, most people sought the safety of their homes as it flew overhead.

All descriptions seemed to indicate it was the Snallygaster, last reported in these parts on March 5, 1909. As the life expectancy of a Snallygaster is only about twenty years, the most logical explanation seemed to be that the latest sighting was the offspring of the 1909 creature, possibly hatched from one of the eggs laid near Burkittsville.

Since the Snallygaster appears so rarely, the Middletown *Valley Register* requested that local residents sighting the creature provide as accurate and detailed a description as possible for scientific purposes.

Two such residents, Charles F. Martin and Edward M. L. Lighter, were able to provide the necessary information. While driving a truck on the National Pike just east of Braddock Heights, they spotted the Snallygaster flying about twenty-five feet overhead. They thoroughly confirmed the descriptions published the previous week.

The Snallygaster finally met his end in a way some might envy. The creature was flying near Frog Hollow in Washington County when it was attracted by the aroma of a 2500-gallon vat of moonshine. As the beast flew overhead, it was overcome by the fumes and dropped into the boiling mash. A short time later, revenue agents George Dansforth and Charles Cushwa arrived on the scene. They had received information about the still, but were rather startled at the sight of the dead monster in the vat.

The two agents exploded five hundred pounds of dynamite under the still, destroying the remains of the Snallygaster and John Barleycorn's workshop.

A great deal has been written about the Snallygaster since 1909. It has appeared in countless articles in the Middletown *Valley Register, Frederick News Post,* and other area newspapers.

Is has also appeared in the *Baltimore Sun, National Geographic,* and *Time* Magazine.

In 1976, the *Washington Post* sponsored an unsuccessful search for the Snallygaster, as well as other strange Maryland creatures.

Frederick County is known for a great many things, but most will agree that none is as imaginative as the Snallygaster. Those of us who have been entertained by stories of the Snallygaster owe our thanks to the resourceful staff of the Middletown *Valley Register*, particularly George C. Rhoderick, Sr. and Ralph S. Wolfe, Sr., who in 1909 thought they would write a little nonsense to entertain the readers and boost circulation. Little did they realize that their imagination would continue to amuse for seventy years.

Also found on the Internet's Encyclopedia Mythica, this:

Snallygaster

by Gerald Musinsky

Snallygaster is an "oicotype" from the Frederick County region of Maryland, USA. Most likely corrupted German "schnell geiste", a Pennsylvania Dutch term meaning "quick spirit" often associated with those draughts that slam doors, topple over lightweight objects, or scatter papers. The visual or physical appearance of the Snallygaster is confusing since there are several variation narratives, some of which where invented after the oral tradition, having roots in the dragonlore of the early settlers. The Snallygaster more often has similarities to dragons, green and scaled, and winged.

However, of her tales exist around the South Mountain region where the Snallygaster is a monstrous bird preying on young children. *[Shades of the Blair Witch! - Jonah*] Literary accounts of the Snallygaster were printed in the local newspapers. These narratives were most likely invented tales by two rival editors. To end the rivalry caused the Snallygaster demise; sent plummeting headlong into a boiling vat of whiskey. Such a just end for this unseen spirit. Of interest to scholars is the nature of the various tales likely invented, those which were patterned after Dragonlore, the absence of Native American influence (owing to the region once inhabited by Leni Lenape, Susquehannocks, Cherokee and other Northeast tribes), and its connection to Pennsylvania Dutch lore.

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31 December, 2014 - 21:55

The Spectacular Ancient Megaliths of the Ural Mountains

Great attention has been paid to the variety of magnificent megalithic structures around the world. Yet very little is reported on the mysterious and impressive set of stone structures that can be found in the Ural Mountains of Russia. These megaliths are numerous and take on many different forms, including dolmens, menhirs, and a large megalithic cultic complex on Vera Island. While the structure and location of the hundreds of megalithic structures have been assessed in the detail, little is known about the origin of these megaliths and the culture that constructed them.

The Ural Mountain range runs from North to South through Western Russia. They extend across a total of 2,500 km (1,600 miles), reaching along the northern border of Kazakhstan from the Kara Sea to the Kazakh Steppe. The range further continues into Vaygach Island and the island of Novaya Zemlya. The highest peak, at approximately 1,895 meters (6,217 ft) in elevation is Mount Narodnaya. It is estimated to be approximately 250 to 300 million years old, making the Urals one of the world's oldest extant mountain ranges. The Russians view the Urals as a "treasure box" of mineral resources, including iron, copper, gold, malachite, alexandrite, and other gems.

The Ural Mountains. Source: BigStockPhoto

In the Sverdlovsk Oblast region, in the Middle Urals, there can be found numerous dolmens. According to conventional descriptions, a dolmen is a type of single-chambered megalithic tomb; however, there is really no evidence to suggest that they were initially constructed as tombs. Rather, it seems that subsequent civilizations chose to use them for this purpose.

The Ural Mountains

Dolmens are usually comprised of two or more vertical stones supporting a flat horizontal stone on top. There can be variations, ranging from relatively simple to very complex. The dolmens in the Urals are considered to be small compared to other dolmens, ranging from approximately 1.5 - 2.5 m in width and length. There is some variance in the dolmens at the Urals, with two distinct styles. The stone plate dolmens are created with a mound of stones that have an attached chamber. These usually have a square court in front, and are sometimes surrounded by smaller stones. The boulder dolmens are constructed from large

boulders that form a chamber. The chamber is covered by one or more flat stones. There is some variation in structure of the boulder dolmens, but they all have two entrance points - a main entrance to the side and a smaller entrance between boulders.

Left: Dolmen of stone plates. (Wikipedia) Right: Dolmen of boulders (Wikipedia)

The menhirs are the most typical megalith found in the Urals. A menhir is a single vertical stone. They can be found singularly, as a monolith, or in groups. The menhirs found in the Urals include monoliths and groupings, and tend to be roughly finished. All of the monoliths discovered to this point are located near either a settlement or a cemetery from the Bronze Age (3300 – 600 BC). Some of the menhir groups are in rows, 13 - 18 m long. A circular shaped structure was discovered at the village of Akhunovo in Bashkiria. Eight menhirs are formed into a circular shape that is approximately 25 m in diameter.

Menhir at Akhunovo

Menhir at Akhunovo (Wikimedia Commons)

While the dolmens and menhirs are amazing and mysterious structures themselves, the most amazing find in the Urals are the megaliths of Vera Island in Lake Turgoyak.

Dating to the Eneolithic period, these megaliths are referred to as Megalith Number 1, Megalith Number 2, Megalith Number 3, Vera Island 9, and Vera Island 4. Megalith Number 1 is the largest megalith structure on the island, standing at 16 by 9 m. It is cut into the bedrock and covered with capstones. It is oriented to the west, and includes a long entrance, a central hall, and two chambers, with a connecting corridor. It includes windows and sculptures of bulls and wolves. It is speculated the Megalith Number 1 served as a temple at some point.

Inside Megalith 1, Vera Island

Inside Megalith 1, Vera Island (Wikimedia Commons)

Megalith Number 2, pictured in the feature image, was found carved into a rocky slope with a mound structure covering it. It is oriented north and contain two chambers connected by a corridor. Megalith Number 3 is created by large boulders with a square pit cut into the center rock. It is closed off by vertical stone slabs with massive boulders as capstones. Vera Island 9 is a cultic ritual place

with two menhirs, while Vera Island 4 is a cultic place surrounded by vertical stones with a small menhir in the center.

Cultic place of Vera island 4 (Wikimedia Commons)

The megaliths of the Urals are undoubtedly an impressive sight, yet strangely, virtually nothing is known about who created them, how they were built, or what purpose they were intended to serve. The megaliths stretch across an immense area of land, suggesting that they were not all created by a single group.

Megalith Number 1 on Vera Island is believed to have been a temple at some point, however, other megaliths present no obvious signs that they were used for any religious purposes. Nevertheless, it is possible that the megaliths had a common use in spite of the variances in size and shape.

It is hoped that further archaeological research may help to unravel the mysteries of these spectacular structures, as well as the civilization that created them many millennia ago.

Featured image: Megalithic structure on Vera Island (Wikipedia)

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By M R Reese

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The Sushruta Samhita and Plastic Surgery in Ancient India, 6th century B.C.

ancient-origins.net

The Sushruta Samhita and Plastic Surgery in Ancient India

26 December, 2014 - 23:37dhwty

Plastic surgery seems to be an invention of the modern age. The desire to attain physical beauty is no doubt one of the factors that has contributed to the popularity of this procedure. Apart from cosmetic reasons, plastic surgery is also carried out for reconstructive purposes. Yet, plastic surgery has been around longer than most people realize. One of the earliest instances of plastic surgery can be found in the *Sushruta Samhita*, an important medical text from India.

The *Sushruta Samhita* is commonly dated to the 6th century B.C., and is attributed to the physician Sushruta (meaning 'very famous' in Sanskrit). The *Sushruta Samhita*'s most well-known contribution to plastic surgery is the reconstruction of the nose, known also as rhinoplasty. The process is described as such:

> *The portion of the nose to be covered should be first measured with a leaf. Then a piece of skin of the required size should be dissected from the living skin of the cheek, and turned back to cover the nose, keeping a small pedicle attached to the cheek. The part of the nose to which the skin is to be attached should be made raw by cutting the nasal stump with a knife. The physician then should place the skin on the nose and stitch the two parts swiftly, keeping the skin properly elevated by inserting two tubes of eranda (the castor-oil plant) in the position of the nostrils, so that the new nose gets proper shape. The skin thus properly adjusted, it should then be sprinkled with a powder of licorice, red sandal-wood and barberry plant. Finally, it should be covered with cotton, and clean sesame oil should be constantly applied. When the skin has united and granulated, if the nose is too short or too long, the middle of the flap should be divided and an endeavor made to enlarge or shorten it.*

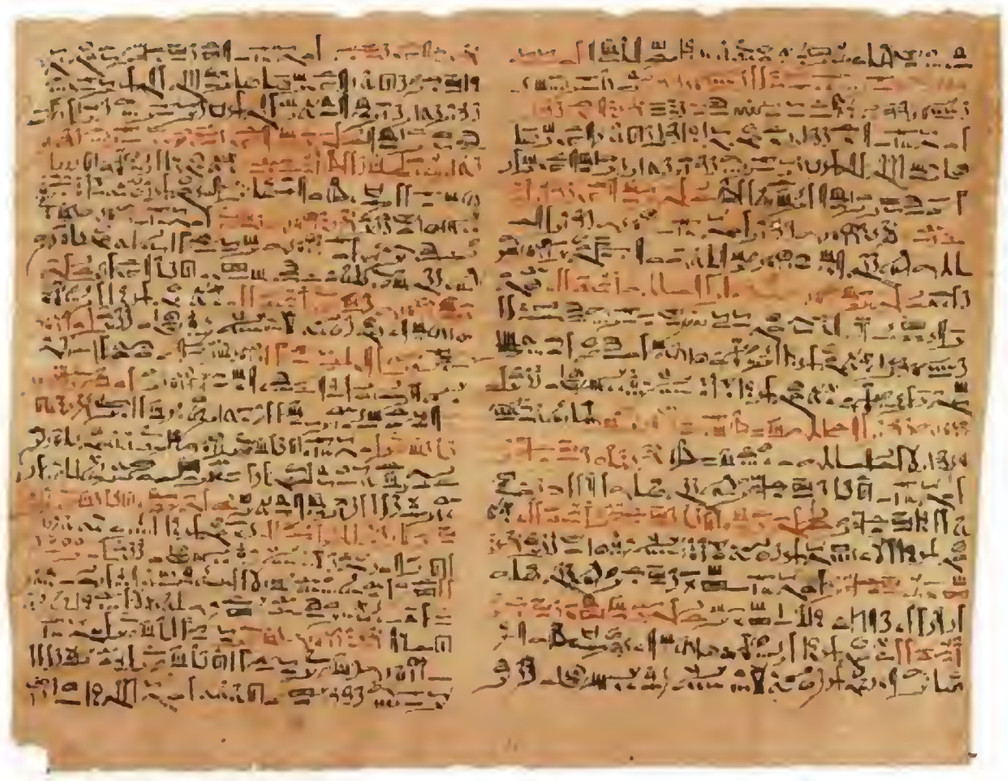
A statue dedicated to Sushruta at the Patanjali Yogpeeth institute in Haridwar. Wikimedia, CC

Other contributions of the *Sushruta Samhita* towards the practice of plastic surgery include the use of cheek flaps to reconstruct absent ear lobes, the use of wine as anesthesia, and the use of leeches to keep wounds free of blood clots.

A statue dedicated to Sushruta at the Patanjali Yogpeeth institute in Haridwar

It may also be pointed out that the *Sushruta Samhita* is also one of the foundational texts of the Ayurveda, the traditional medical system of India. Therefore, the *Sushruta Samhita* contains more than just the description of plastic surgery procedures. The *Sushruta Samhita*, in its existing form, is said to consist of 184 chapters containing descriptions of 1,120 illnesses, as well as several hundred types of drugs made from animals, plants and minerals. Furthermore, the *Sushruta Samhita* also contains 300 surgical procedures divided into 8 categories, and 121 different types of surgical instruments.

In addition, Sushruta taught that in order to be a good doctor, one should possess medical knowledge in both its theoretical and practical forms. To this end, he devised various experimental modules (these can also be found in the *Sushruta Samhita*) for his students to practice the different surgical procedures contained in his medical text. For instance, 'incision' and 'excision' were to be practiced on vegetables and leather bags filled with mud of different densities, 'probing' on moth-eaten wood or bamboo, and 'puncturing' on the veins of dead animals and lotus stalks.



The Edwin Smith Papyrus - the world's oldest surviving surgical document

The Edwin Smith Papyrus - the world's oldest surviving surgical document - details practical treatments to illnesses and injury, but does not mention plastic or reconstructive surgery like the Sushruta Samhita. Written in hieratic script in ancient Egypt around 1,600 B.C. Public Domain

During the 8th century A.D., the *Sushruta Samhita* was translated into Arabic by a person known as Ibn Abillsaibial. This Arabic translation, known as the *Kitab Shah Shun al-Hindi* or the *Kitab i-Susurud*, eventually made its way to Europe by the end of the medieval period. In Renaissance Italy, the Branca family of Sicily, and the Bolognese doctor, Gasparo Tagliacozzi, were familiar with the surgical techniques found in the *Sushruta Samhita*. Nevertheless, European mastery of plastic surgery, and surgery in general, only came several centuries later. Meanwhile, in India the *Suhruta Samhita* has made Indian physicians highly skilled in surgical practice. In 1794, an account was published in the *Gentleman's Magazine of London* describing the use of plastic

surgery used to reconstruct the nose of a Maratha cart-driver mutilated by the soldiers of Tippu Sultan. The procedure was similar to that taught by Sushruta, though instead of grafting skin from the cheek, skin from the forehead was grafted instead. In a way, this shows that medical knowledge in India was not a dead subject, and that innovations could be made to further refine surgical techniques from the 6th century B.C. Thus, Sushruta's procedure for rhinoplasty was introduced to the West in this manner.

Featured image: Detail, The Susruta-Samhita (A Treatise on Ayurvedic Medicine) Public Domain

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The Sushruta Samhita and Plastic Surgery in Ancient India, 6th century B.C.

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Lumberjacks either enjoyed fooling gullible people, or spent way too much time in the woods surrounded by trees and one another. In any event, a fourth "fearsome critter" brightening American folklore is the Teakettler. Like the Axehandle Hound, the Teakettler hails from Minnesota and Wisconsin. Resembling a short legged dog, with cat-like ears, the Teakettler races around backwards while doing its tea kettle impersonation. No, that shrill whistling noise you hear is not your tinnitus kicking up, its the Teakettler blowing off steam. It LITERALLY blows off steam. While running backwards (Teakettlers always run backwards), steam pours from its mouth, and a high pitched shreak announces its presence. A shy creature, it's only been seen by a few lumberjacks in the right place at the right time. So if you happen to be in the woods, and hear a tea kettle whistling, it may not be campers making breakfast, but the Teakettler doing its crazy, backwards, steamy race.

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16th Jul 2011 | 1 note

Cryptid-a-Day 7!

The Tote-road Shagamaw is quite the curious creature indeed. Upon its front legs are the paws of a bear, but on its back are the hooves of a moose. Every quarter mile the Shagamaw will switch to either walking on it's front or back legs to switch up the tracks it leaves, confusing any would be attackers. Despite its appearance the Tote-road Shagamaw is very gentle and chooses to only feed upon clothing discarded along roads or left outside at campsites to dry (Cotton is its favorite).

1. lincolncountyparanormal reblogged this from boarfeathers
2. boarfeathers posted this

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The town with three Christmas Days

28December2014

bbc.com

The Christmas tree in Bethlehem's Manger Square, outside the Church of the Nativity

Christmas comes but once a year - unless you live in Bethlehem, where three different Christian denominations celebrate on three different days.

There are no calls of "legs eleven" or "two fat ladies" at the Arab Women's Union bingo in Bethlehem.

And there's another big difference from your standard British game. Instead of cash, the prizes are household items: washing powder, toilet rolls or, if you're lucky, an electric blanket.

Bingo is always popular with housewives here but the idea of the union's weekly gathering is to raise funds for charity.

In the run-up to Christmas, it organises a party for needy children. Dozens of local kids are entertained with clowns, fed lunch and given goodies to take home.

Christian members of the women's union feel a special responsibility for keeping alive the Christmas message of compassion and hope.

"Christmas is our national feast and the feast of our city," says president and great-grandmother, Virginique Canawati.

"It's not Christmas if you're happy at home with your family and you have a neighbour with nothing," adds the bingo caller, Susie Nasr.

"There's a lot of poverty in Bethlehem. We have the highest unemployment in the West Bank and people have to think about every penny they spend," she adds.

After a game of bingo earlier this month, I proudly displayed my winnings - a large bottle of fabric conditioner and a packet of wet wipes.

Then as we polished off some tasty thyme and cheese pastries, the women told me about the delicious meals they had planned for Christmas dinner.

There's not really a market for turkey and all the trimmings here, although one year I did surprise my visiting parents - who are used to oven-ready products - by returning from the butcher's with a warm, freshly killed bird in a plastic bag.

The preference of Christians in the Holy Land tends to be Arabic salads followed by a main course - perhaps lamb stuffed with rice, or *maashi* - stuffed vine leaves, aubergines and courgettes.

While there's an emphasis on having new clothes for the feast, gift giving is far less excessive than you typically see in Western countries.

Workmen decorate a Christmas tree in Manger Square

Decorating the Christmas tree in Manger Square

Christmas decorations on sale in Bethlehem

Christmas decorations on sale in Bethlehem

And the celebrations go on for longer than we're used to. Indeed, rather than having one Christmas Day, three are marked in Bethlehem.

The Catholics lead processions along the traditional pilgrimage route from Jerusalem to the Nativity Church ahead of their Christmas on 25 December.

But now attention switches to the Greek Orthodox, who make up the majority of Palestinian Christians. Their Christmas Day falls on 7 January.

The 13 day difference is explained by calendars. While the Latin church switched to the Gregorian calendar, devised by Pope Gregory in the 16th Century, the Eastern Orthodox churches still use the older, Julian calendar - created during the reign of Julius Caesar in 45 BC.

What makes the situation in the Holy Land really unusual is that Armenians here wait even longer for Christmas. Their parade isn't until 18 January.

On each Christmas Eve, Bethlehem gives a warm welcome to church patriarchs and priests when they enter Manger Square.

And as waiting crowds of the faithful munch chocolate Santas and sip at sahlab - a hot Ottoman-era drink made from orchids - it's the marching bands that keep them entertained.

The Grotto at Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem where Christians believe Jesus was born

The Grotto at Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem where Christians believe Jesus was born

For weeks now in Beit Jala, the town next to Bethlehem where I live, there's been the constant din of drums and bagpipes - as the scout troops practise their festive routines.

Scouting was introduced to Palestine in British Mandate times - from 1920 to 1948 - and it remains hugely popular with boys and girls.

The head of the Arab Orthodox Scout Group, Khaled Qassis, looks more than a little stressed as he organises a Christmas bazaar and street clean-ups while the pipers play on.

But he can't disguise his pride at his scouts' place in the Christmas line-ups.

"As scouts, the last thing we're interested in is showing off," he tells me. "But we are very famous for playing well."

Many Palestinian Christians see themselves as custodians of Christmas and its colourful traditions.

The dwindling number of Christians in the Holy Land adds a sense of urgency to their celebrations. Nowadays many young people in the West Bank choose to emigrate because of the difficult economic and social conditions created by Israel's occupation.

In the quiet of Beit Jala's Virgin Mary church, where the air's thick with incense, Father George reflects that this time of year carries spiritual and political significance.

"When we celebrate we show the world that Bethlehem's a peaceful, safe city," he says.

"This is the birthplace of Christ and we're the oldest congregation in the world. If we don't light our trees and hang decorations here, then we'll die out."

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Jubokko

The Tree of Blood

I have come across a wide assortment of strange and twisted vampire stories – from vampire cats to floating heads, but todayâ €™s tale is a new one even for me.

Among the many fascinatingly wicked **Japanese** myths, the **jubokko** is for sure my new favorite. According to the myth, on grounds where there has been much bloodshed, such as execution sites or battlefields, a special kind of tree grows. This tree is known as the jubokko. But what is so unique about this tree?Â The jubokko is a vampire tree that feeds on the blood and life-force of humans.

These demonized trees must feed off of humans in order to survive. But unfortunately the jubokko appears as a normal tree, there is no way of knowing what it really isâ€¦ until itâ€™s too late. Once a person walks too close to the tree it attacks, capturing the person with its branches and draining them of their blood.

There is one way to spot the jubokko for what it is but you have to get up close to it, which obviously means painful death for you. Either way, you can reveal a jubokko by cutting it, for it is said that a jubokko will bleed real human **blood**. Another problem is that is heals incredibly fast, so even if you were able to some how attack it from a distance it would simply bleed for a moment and then heal.

Oh but it doesnâ€™t end there, this evil tree is also known to hide amongst other trees and bushes and it is able to alter the flora in the area. This makes it very easy for someone to get lost in the forest, which makes it easy for a jubokko to snatch them up. In some versions of the myth the jubokko can speak to other plants as well and are able to find its victims that way.

But itâ€™s not all bad; in fact a jubokko can bring goodness to a lucky few. Any branch taken from a jubokko tree, with permission of course, is a powerful item that can be used to heal and purify almost anyone.
Well, I guess thatâ€™s something.

– Moonlight

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The Vampire Beast of Bladenboro

So what was the Beast of Bladenboro?

There was certainly something that killed some dogs in the woods of Bladen County in the early days of 1954. But what exactly that something was and whether it warranted the hype that went around it remains unknown.

And there was a lot of hype. For a small North Carolina town, Bladenboro was home to an unusually high number of showmen in prominent positions. Among these was the mayor, Woodrow "Bob" Fussell, who also happened to be the owner of the local movie theater.

It was Mayor Fussell who first called the newspapers and organized the party of professional hunters to come in from Wilmington. It was also Fussell who booked horror movie called "The Big Cat" into his theater at the peak of the excitement, advertising "Now you can see the Cat! We've got him on our screen! And in Technicolor!"

The early 1950s were the height of the craze for gimmicks promoting films, with producers like William Castle installing buzzers in the seats of movie houses and having ambulances waiting outside in case anyone was overcome with terror during a show. Fussell can't be blamed for knowing a good gimmick when he saw one.

The was also another Bladenboro resident, Dick "The Half-Man" Hilburn, who was born with no legs and only one arm, Hilburn had traveled with the circus for some years, working as a tattoo artist and running a sideshow with his partner Carl "The Frog Boy" Norwood. Hilburn, who returned to his hometown of Bladenboro after traveling with his sideshow, set up shop a a sign painter. Hilburn was a much-loved member of the Bladenboro community. He was known for endlessly entertaining children, doing tricks on a skateboard, and causing people to marvel at the seemingly endless number of feats he could accomplish despite his disability.

At the height of the flap, Hilburn definitely saw an opportunity. He began to produce license plates and other memorabilia with the vampire beast painted on it.

Describing the incident years later, Mayor Fussell confessed "A Little publicity never hurt a small town," and stated that the beast was "10% real, 90% imagination."

Fussell definitely had a hand in stoking that imagination, but he never anticipated how out of control the situation would get. The story also hit the papers in an otherwise slow news week, getting a great deal more attention and trouble than expected.

With the beast being reported across the nation, far more people than could be managed by Bladen County's very small police force flocked into the town. The decision to call an end to the hunt came about because of the very real danger that an overanxious hunter would shoot

someone thinking he was killing the beast.

What was the beast? What exactly it was that killed those dogs will never be known. But dogs disappearing or being killed in a rural community isn't all that rare of an occurrence. That a fabulous story about a vampire killing dogs caught on in the national media, and that thousands of people believed it, definitely happens much less often. It was probably mostly an accident that the story just happened to catch on in the way to did, but some of it may also have been intentional.

Seeing a bunch of people chase through the woods looking for a monster can also be a good for a laugh. There have been persistent rumors that a group of men in Bladenboro fanned the flames of the story, spreading more and more exaggerated tales of the beast to the news media. The Beast of Bladenboro incident mat have been the largest snipe hunt in history.

Today, the fuss in 1954 is a source of pride for Bladenboro and the town even hosts a yearly Beast Fest to commemorate the event.

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The Way of the Gods: Shinto and its Impact on Japan's Strange Folklore

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March 1, 2013Andrew Kincaid

Izanagi and Izanami in the act of creating Japan.

Delving into the world of folklore as much as I have, I've come across a lot of very strange beliefs. While weird beliefs aren't limited to Japan, not by a long shot, the Japanese certainly don't disappoint when it comes to bizarre critters. I've often found myself wondering why and how so much weirdness came to be concentrated on a relatively small chain of islands on the rim of the Pacific. Now, I am far from a scholar when it comes to Japanese studies, but it isn't much of a stretch to say that Japanese religious traditions probably have something to do with it.

Nowadays, Japan is a mostly secular country. The bulk of Japanese tell poll-takers that they don't consider themselves part of any religion. Certainly, many people observe various Shinto and Buddhist festivals, but the vast majority seem to do so more out of cultural habit than actual belief. Religion has little impact on daily life in Japan in the 21st century.

This was not the case in Japan's early days. Japan's indigenous religion is called Shinto, meaning "the Way of the Gods". No one knows when exactly it developed, and it lacked any sort of coherent structure as is often seen in religious systems. Shinto is essentially an animistic religion, which is to say that its adherents imbue everything in nature–mountains, trees, streams, rocks, etc–with a spirit.

In Japan, these spirits were known as *kami*. They were generally considered friendly to humans, but they could be angered by human actions, particularly if humans polluted holy places with uncleanliness. When angered, kami could bring about natural disasters and other mischief. In order to keep the *kami* happy, early Shinto practitioners practiced various cleanliness rituals.

The Shinto belief system grew into a complex network of deities, spirits, and demons. It's pretty easy to see how a huge variety of mythological creatures can develop from a religion that claims everything has a spirit!

There were some unifying features of Shintoism though, namely the myth of Japan's creation. Izanagi and Izanami created Japan when droplets of water dripped off the tip of Izanagi's spear. The pair of deities descended to the newly formed islands and proceeded to have a huge family, most notably the sun goddess Amaterasu, who would go on to become the most important goddess in the Shinto pantheon and the legendary progenitor of the Imperial line.

Shintoism today is pretty well mixed with Buddhism. Buddhism came into Japan from Korea at around the 6th century AD, bringing its own complex mythology to the islands. The two systems merged fairly well together, with Buddhism emphasizing ethical conduct and Shintoism emphasizing respect for nature. Buddhism brought the concepts of demons like

Mara, not to mention its own vast cache of demons, monster,s saints, and spirits.

In later years, as Japan approached the 20th and later the 21st century, other influences came into the country. Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Jainism, and a plethora of home grown sects all call Japan home. With such a vast melting pot of philosophies and myth systems, is it any wonder some strange stories pop out now and then?

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THE ORACULAR OAK AT DODONA

© Tracy Boyd

"When I hear a little rustling rush in the grass and heath, or in the dead leaves under the trees, I can tell whether it is snake or lizard, mouse or bird. Many birds I am aware of only by the sound of their flight. I can nearly always tell what trees I am near by the sound of the wind in their leaves, though in the same tree it differs much from spring to autumn, as the leaves become of a harder and drier texture. The birches have a small, quick, high-pitched sound; so near that of falling rain that I am often deceived into thinking it really is rain, when it is only their own leaves hitting each other with a small rain-like patter. The voice of the Oak leaves is also rather high-pitched, though lower than that of Birch. Chestnut leaves in a mild breeze sound much more deliberate; a sort of slow slither. Nearly all trees in gentle wind have a pleasant sound . . . ." (2)

These are the impressions of a virtually blind woman of great vision, the gardener Gertrude Jekyll of Munstead Wood (1843-1933), who created some of the most breathtaking gardens of all time. Her sense of hearing, and her sense of smell, were very highly developed, making up for her extremely impaired vision. Because "her natural focus was two inches," (3) she was blessed with the ability to take in the myriad mysteries of nature at very close range. Her vivid descriptions of the rustling of leaves and the wing-beats of birds could just as easily be the words of an ancient augur, such as the blind seer Teiresias; of a wise Druid fore-telling the future to a king; or of the dove-priestesses who inhabited the ancient oracular oak of Dodona.

The raging winds and rain were the most prevalent feature of the barren landscape of Dodona, high in the rugged mountains of northwestern Greece. There stood what was believed to be the most ancient oak in Greece. It was already old in Homer's day when the weary Odysseus beseeched "the spelling leaves of the old oak" (4) to reveal whether he should return to Ithaca openly or conceal himself in disguise. (5) In his voluminous The Golden Bough, a study of Diana and the oak cult, James G. Frazer offers us a glimpse of the eerie and terrifying site where Zeus, the highest god of the Hellenes, "the divinity of the sky, the rain, and the thunder," (6) spoke through the wind and the rain.

> Perhaps the oldest and certainly one of the most famous sanctuaries in Greece was that of Dodona, where Zeus was revered in the oracular oak. The thunder-storms which are said to rage at Dodona more frequently than anywhere else in Europe, would render the spot a fitting home for the god whose voice was heard alike in the rustling of the oak leaves and in the crash of thunder. Perhaps the bronze gongs which kept up a humming in the wind round the sanctuary were meant to mimic the thunder that might so often be heard rolling and rumbling in the coombs of the stern and barren mountains which shut in the gloomy valley. (7)

But had he always been there, as the aged oak had been, in archaic memory? Some say that "the prophetic oak appears to have been the original feature," (8) and that those who administered to its service were priestesses known as peleiades, or 'wild doves'. A surviving fragment of Hesiod tells us that just beyond the rich meadows of the sheep-herding tribes of the land of Ellopia:

> . . . upon its border is built a city, Dodona [in Epirus]; and Zeus loved it and (appointed) it to be his oracle, reverenced by men . . . And they (the doves) lived in the hollow of an oak. From them men of earth carry away all kinds of prophecy, – whosoever fares to that spot and questions the deathless god, and comes bringing gifts with good omens. (9)

The impropriety of a god of thunder and lightning dispensing oracles is evidenced in the fact that "the giving of oracles was a chthonian prerogative." (10) In the earliest strata of primitive belief, this is a realm lying entirely within the province of the goddess of the earth. To substantiate the earth-bound nature of such oracular powers, we have the ancient view that

> . . . the tree derived a further title to its oracular prestige from its connection by means of its roots with the under-world, the mysterious abode of departed spirits, in whom wisdom and knowledge of the future were supposed to be vested. Thus the special prophetic power attributed to the variety of oak (probably the Quercus esculus) [or 'edible oak'] which grew at Dodona was ascribed by later writers to the fact that its roots pierced the earth more deeply than those of other trees, reaching down even to Tartarus . . . . (11)

It is an archaic and animistic view of the world that allows one to see a tree as alive with the force of "a supernatural essence" (12) dwelling within its branches, and producing its "mysterious rustlings and movements" (13) – messages that can be understood only by those who speak the language of the spirit of the tree. The winged creatures of the wind who lived in the hollows of the ancient oak were its indigenous spirits. These all-knowing doves were birds of the chthonic realm, universally regarded as "prophetic birds, omens of death, and spirits of the dead." (14) And it was they, themselves, who interpreted the eerie sounds of the incessantly murmuring leaves stirred by the unceasing winds in this desolate and deathly place at the furthest reaches of the known Greek world.

There can be no doubt that Zeus appropriated the highly revered ancient place for himself. The nature of primitive religion is such that, as a matter of course, "the mantic weather-bird precedes the prophetic god." (15) The translator of the Hesiodic fragment informs us of the antiquity of the oracle by noting that it "was first consulted by Deucalion and Pyrrha after the Flood" (16) in prehistoric times, long before the arrival of the god of storms. That the dove-priestesses and the oak tree preceded the oracular worship of Zeus is evidenced also from a statement in Pausanias to the effect that "the people in that part of the world . . . thought the most truthful oracles came from the wild doves and the oak trees . . . ." (17)

It was only "later writers [who] say that the god responded in the rustling of leaves in the oaks for which the place was famous." (18) And Carl Kerenyi, the great scholar of the gods and goddesses of the Greeks, provides us with another fragment from Hesiod, which most emphatically asserts the originally low position of Zeus, the usurper of the Dodonaean oak.

> Not in the canopy of the oak tree, the whispering of whose leaves passed for the voice of Zeus, did the god dwell but on its floor' [en pythmeni

phegou] as Hesiod expressly says. So none other than the Dodonaean

Zeus was originally not a sky god at all! If he had any characteristic trait

it was this alone, that he was the god of the Hellenes, who there connected

him with an older oracle. (19)

We can glean this truth also from the avian language of Richmond Lattimore's translation of Homer's Iliad in the prayer of Achilleus to "Zeus who delights in the thunder": (20)

High Zeus, lord of Dodona, Pelasgian, living far off,

brooding over wintry Dodona, your prophets about you

living, the Selloi who sleep on the ground with feet unwashed. Hear me. (21)

This intuitive translation provides a chilling sense of the combined elemental brooding of storm and bird in this far-off place of wintry desolation. It is the weather that the god who sleeps on the ground controls, enshrouding in his mists the majestic oak, and those with unwashed feet who sleep beneath her on the hallowed earth. In spite of the claims, both ancient and modern, that the sleeping men were the earliest oracular prophets at Dodona, (22) there is ample evidence to suggest that their earth-bound pronation was but a mimetic imitation of their winged predecessors, the most ancient inhabitants and guardians of the place.

Anyone who has even casually observed ground-feeding doves settling down for the night has witnessed their hunkering down on the earth under their nesting trees at the last light of day. Their camouflage is such that it is as though they become one with the earth as they lie in their "earthen beds." (23) But at the very moment when darkness falls, there is a sudden rush of mournful air and a rustling of tree branches as they find their secret resting places in the shroud of darkness.

In the ancient world, the making of one's bed on sacred ground is a prelude to the common ritual practice known as incubation, a word inspired by the sitting on of eggs, which perfectly reflects the process by which knowledge is received in a dream state. We know that "the Selloi or Helloi lay on the ground on earthen beds and had dreams which they interpreted prophetically." (24) So as not to perpetuate the misreadings of Homer's intent regarding the "prophets . . . who sleep on the ground," (25) it should be noted that the deferential posture of the Selloi is more in keeping with the attitude of suppliants than of priests. The sacred literature of the world is strewn with examples of such seekers of favor who settle down for the night on the body of "Sacred Mother Earth, who sends the dreams." (26) The practice was so common among the Greeks that its practitioners were given a name, the Chamai-eunai, or "Couchers-on-the-ground", (27) who "sleep . . . perchance to dream", (28) "in order that in their dreams they might draw oracular wisdom from the Earth." (29)

The doves, who were perched high above the sleepers in the whispering leaves of the revered prophetic oak, were its only occupants. It was they who interpreted the rustling about them of its leaves in the wind as they sheltered in the hollows of its trunk, "brooding over wintry Dodona"; they who interpreted the meaning of the dreams of those who slept on the earth below under their ever-watchful eye. As one pre-eminent scholar of Greek divination and bird-magic has definitively stated with regard to the oracular procedure at Dodona, "the balance of the evidence must lie on the side of the doves." (30)

Whether in their earliest form as birds, or in their later form as wise old women, the ancient priestesses of Dodona were skilled in the arts of augury. They were what the Greeks called oionomanteis or, 'those who divined from birds', a prac-tice so widespread throughout the ancient Greek world that the earliest works of Hesiod and Homer, as well as those of Sophocles, Aristophanes, and other later poets of the stage, abound with examples of this archaic and honored tradition, still very much alive in the common era. "For the ancient Greeks all birds were ominous and the word 'bird' itself was synonymous with

omen as Aristophanes says." (31)

How this came to be, is examined in Jane Ellen Harrison's lucid discussion of Hesiod's Works and Days, a practical treatise on "the weather and the crops and the season," (32) which details what one should watch for to keep the wolves from the door. Of his advice, she comments that:

> . . . first and foremost you should watch the birds who are so near the
>
> heavenly signs, the teirea, and who must know more than man. This
>
> watching of the birds we are accustomed to call the 'science of augury';
>
> . . . in its origin it is pure magic, 'pure doing; the magical birds make the
>
> weather before they portend it'. (33)

The Greek phrase used to describe this diligent observation of "the heavenly signs" by the ordinary person is ornithas krinon, which Harrison quite purpose-

fully translates as "knowing in birds," as distinct from "reading or discriminating omens," a skill reserved for mantic augurs. (34) The avian prognosticators of the magical Dodonaean realm evidently possessed both of these abilities, which is why the native population looked to the wild doves and the oak trees for advice before the formal establishment of an oracle at Dodona. (35) The ancient wisdom of the dove-priestesses so predominates in the writings about the oracle in the classical period that "the tree is almost neglected." (36) The classical "tradition undoubtedly represents the Peleiai as actually giving the responses." (37)

The age and number of these venerable dove-priestesses, the peleiades, or 'wild rock-doves', known to us as the common pigeon, Columba livia, has been pre-served by Strabo, who records the appellation treis graiai, or 'three old women', to describe them. (38) The word 'gray', a blend of black and white, which means 'to shine', or 'to gleam', is perfectly exemplified in the mythology of another otherworldly avian triad named the Graiai, 'the old ones'. They are the aged swan-maidens, white-haired crones who share but one eye and one tooth, which they pass between them as they stand guard over their winged sisters, the Gorgons. In their younger days, before Aeschylus got hold of them, they were beautiful, "fair-cheeked," (39) and impeccably well-dressed. Like their sisters, the Gorgons, they were born old, that is, they were white-haired, or "grey from their birth." (40)

Ancient etymologies connect the names of the two Graiai, who first appear in Hesiod as Pemphredo and Enuo, with "ashen-coloured" clouds. (41) Although we know the third sister as Deino, she is not named by Hesiod out of fear and respect for her extreme sanctity. Her name means, "the terrible, fearful, or awful one, whom one cannot or will not name." (42) These ancient swan-women are weather deities.

> Swans . . . symbolize clouds; and the epithets of Hesiod suggest that the
>
> Graiai may represent the bright clouds of fine weather and especially the
>
> sunset, while their sisters the Gorgons personify the dark clouds of storm
>
> and rain. . . . [Some scholars] see in the transferable eye and tooth of the
>
> Graiai, and still more in the baleful glance of the Gorgons, the flash of the
>
> lightning and its apparent passage from cloud to cloud. (43)

The "malignant glances of lightning" (44) are given concrete form in the Aegis, the Gorgoneion shield emblazoned with the snaky-haired head of the mortal Gorgon, Medusa. As a breastplate, it was always

worn by Athene, but when it was carried as a shield by Zeus, it was "shaken [as] a source of terror to his enemies, [and was] sometimes interpreted as a thunder cloud." (45)

The peleiades, or wild rock-doves, still remained three in number when Herodotus of Halicarnassus interviewed them in the mid-fifth century B.C.E. The historian well knew that avian soothsayers had been at this desolate site of Dodona, and had established "the most ancient and, at that period, the only oracle in Greece," (46) before the beginning of recorded time. In other words, long before the arrival of Zeus's reign there, and prior to the establishment of Thebes as the absolute center of Egypt by the Middle Kingdom Dynasty. Herodotus chooses, however, to go to great lengths to repeat legends of the 12th Dynasty Egyptian origin for the oiono-mantic doves, which claims as their point of beginning the home of the ram-god Amun at the Karnak/Luxor temple complex known to the Greeks as "Thebes." (47) The ancient Egyptian name was Ipet-isut, meaning, "The Most Select of Places"; (48) a very convenient starting point.

Herodotus relates two very different, but symbolically related, versions of the Egyptian origin and transmission of the oracles. In their telling he explains how they traveled simultaneously from the Theban temple of Amun (Zeus) in Egypt, to the temples of Ammon-Zeus in the Oasis of Siwa in Libya, and to that of Zeus at Dodona. The first story is told to Herodotus directly by the priests at the Temple of Zeus-Ammon in Greek Thebes, the infamous city of Oedipus in Boeotia, where some six-hundred years later, we are informed by Pausanias, there stood, directly behind the sanctuary, the bird-watching observatory of Teiresias. (49) The second version of the story is related to him on the authority of the three priestesses of Dodona, whom Herodotus names, and who, in his time, interpreted the oracles of the thunder-god's voice.

These are Herodotus's words:

> About the oracles – that of Dodona in Greece and of Ammon in Libya –
>
> the Egyptians have the following legend: according to the priests of the
>
> Theban Zeus, two women connected with the service of the temple were
>
> carried off by the Phoenicians and sold, one in Libya and the other in
>
> Greece, and it was these women who founded the oracles in the two
>
> countries. I asked the priests at Thebes what grounds they had for being
>
> so sure about this, and they told me that careful search had been made for
>
> the women at the time, and that though it was unsuccessful, they had after-
>
> wards learned that the facts were just as they had reported them.
>
> At Dodona, however, the priestesses who deliver the oracles have a differ-
>
> ent version of the story: two black doves, they say flew away from Thebes
>
> in Egypt, and one of them alighted at Dodona, the other in Libya. The
>
> former, perched on an oak, and speaking with a human voice, told them
>
> that there, on that very spot, there should be an oracle of Zeus. Those who
>
> heard her understood the words to be a command from heaven, and at once
>
> obeyed. Similarly the dove which flew to Libya told the Libyans to found

the oracle of Ammon – which is also an oracle of Zeus. The people who

gave me this information were the three priestess at Dodona – Promeneia

the eldest, Timarete the next, and Nicandra the youngest – and their account

is confirmed by the other Dodonaeans connected with the temple. (50)

With a bit of a wink and a nod, the rational Herodotus offers perfectly logical explanations for all of this to what he perceives as a somewhat disbelieving audience. But he has considerable difficulty in justifying the report of the Dodonaean priestesses with regard to the use of human language by the birds, because he, himself, does not believe it. His doubts are laid upon the Dodonaean people in general, rather than on the sanctified priestesses for whom he has the highest regard.

The story which the people of Dodona tell about the doves came, I should

say, from the fact that the women were foreigners, whose language sounded

to them like the twittering of birds; later on the dove spoke with a human

voice, because by that time the woman had stopped twittering and learned

to talk intelligibly. That, at least, is how I should explain the obvious

impossibility of a dove using the language of men. (51)

Alas, one can only comment, in the tradition of Jane Ellen Harrison's memorable response to such foolishness, that "Women from Hesiod's days downwards have always chattered." (52)

Perhaps it was the sounds of the place itself that gave rise to the notion of incessant chattering. With the constant rumble of thunder and the howling winds, there was little silence at Dodona. But it is the ceaseless reverberation of bronze that still echoes in the Greek memory centuries later. For a thousand years, the proverbial phrase 'Dodonaion chalkeion', meaning "the gong at Dodona," was used to describe the tedium of babbling chatter. (53) In earliest times, there appears to have been one enormously resonant gong, such as those used in the rites of the most revered, and feared, chthonian deities, "which they say sounds all day

if a passer-by lays a finger on it." (54) Later this was replaced by a vast series of brazen cauldrons that encircled the perimeter of the the sacred ground. The endlessly echoing vibrations stirred by untiring winds, acted as a sound barrier that formed a magical circle of protection.

While Herodotus dismisses the language of the birds as gibberish, he does accept the word of his holy informants with respect to the rather unusual color of the priestesses in their dove-form; but it is he, not they, who interprets their blackness as signifying their Egyptian race. (55) He completely ignores the more widely current association of the color black with the figure of the wise old crone whose wisdom illuminates. One has to wonder why. One solution has been proffered by Livio Catullo Stecchini, a scholar specializing in the history of measurement in the ancient world. In spite of the fact that Stecchini mistakenly attributes the story of the black doves to the simultaneous establishment of the oracle centers at Dodona and Delphi, rather than those at Dodona and Libya, his brilliant theory of meridians and parallels remains valid. (56)

He maintains that the iconographically consistent presence of pairs of pigeons, perched on, or on either side of, the omphaloi, or 'navels', of the ancient world, are an indication of their function as the measurers of the geodetic absolute center. (57) He adds, that, "from prehistoric times" (58) "carrier pigeons [were] used for establishing geographic distances." (59)

According to Greek legends, a central geodetic point was obtained by loosing two birds of equal strength and using the mean of the time employed in flight. This would allow for differences in wind current and other variables. By repeated flights even more accurate measurements could be obtained. (60) In ancient literature and iconography the flight of two doves is the standard symbol for the stretching of meridians and parallels. (61)

With Stecchini's information in hand, it becomes possible to see that the dove-stories originating out of Egypt are a direct reference to the mathematical calculations used by the Egyptian priests to establish that their place in the world was at the absolute center. The sending out of birds in the religious mythologies of the world occurs only in times of catastrophic change and upheaval as a means of recovering one's orientation. Stecchini reminds us that the 12th Dynasty kings of Egypt were ascending to the throne at about the same time that the Age of Aries began. (62) We can precisely date the beginning of their reign to the year 1991 B.C.E. (63)

Although we cannot with the same certainty pinpoint the exact year of the changing of the Astrological Age, it is estimated that "the Vernal Equinoctial Point of the northern hemisphere entered the constellation . . . Aries about 1953 B.C.[E.], when incidentally the cult of the ram-god Amun was becoming so important in Egypt." (64) Aries the Ram had not been so positioned in the sky for 25,920 years. The northern hemisphere was no longer in the earth-centered Taurean field of reference. The constellation of the Bull, which had ruled the skies for some 2,160 years, had given way to the influence of the Ram, which would now be felt in the religious outpourings of the entire known world.

In Egypt, a major revision to their whole system of viewing the cosmos was precipitated by this astronomical occurrence. (65) The decoded message of the myth, then, reveals that when the new ram-worshipping dynasty "moved the capital and the geodetic center of Egypt to a more central position," (66) the astronomer-priests needed to ascertain accurate measurements with respect to

their own new center. Their universe was now to be centered at Karnak, called in Greek "Thebes"; and Dodona, an ancient and established center of the world, was the very place from which to take those measures.

> In performing astronomical observations it is necessary to express differences of longitude in terms of units of time. . . . The ancients calculated by sidereal time, which they could measure by observing the apparent movement of the vault of heaven. . . . (67) In order to obtain the right length of the second and minute of sidereal time, one must take as reference a degree of latitude further north than Egypt. The degrees at the latitudes of Dodona and Delphi provided the correct values. (68)

These facts, together with the evidence so innocently revealed in Herodotus's report, document that the prehistoric site at Dodona, believed to have been in existence since about 2000 B.C.E., (69) is much older than we had thought. The absolute beginning of the holy site of the earth goddess can only be guessed at, but we do know that in 1991 B.C.E., or thereabouts, when the priests of Amon zeroed in on

it for their coordinates, they not only knew it well, but acknowledged it as a center of esteemed reverence at the furthest reaches of the sacred universe.

Neither can we, with certainty, assign a date to the usurpation of the whispering oak of Dodona by Zeus. Most scholars have assumed a date of about 800 B.C.E. (70) That cannot be. For although Zeus was still groveling on the ground in Hesiod's day about one hundred years later, Homer, who is thought to have lived in about 800 B.C.E., (71) regards the god as a long-established presence, the Lord of the place, whose suppliants sleep on the ground. Obviously, a much earlier date must be assigned for Zeus's transformation into the oak-god of Dodona – possibly a date that aligns with a coincident rising of a new constellation at zero degrees Aries. We just don't know.

Despite the Hellenic addition of a thunder-wielding, lightning-flashing god of rain to the most ancient worship of the venerable earth-mother – whose body he fertilizes that she may produce her crops – the goddess appears to have held her own for many centuries following. This primacy is given voice by a woman named Phaennis, a priestess of the oak whose very name reflects the radiant flash of light that reveals the illuminating wisdom of the dark old women of Dodona. She is introduced to us by Pausanias, who, traveling throughout Greece during the second century of the Common Era, heard much about the ancient splendor of the Sibyls and other soothsayers.

Phaennis is the daughter of the King of the Chaonians, born in about 280 B.C.E., and was apparently "a member of a guild of sacred prophetesses called the Rock-pigeons." (72) The bright language of the doves is echoed in her sacred name, which means 'shining', 'radiant', 'giving light'; and when used to describe the voice, has the meaning of 'clear', 'distinct', and 'far-sounding'. (73) Pausanias tells us that

> Phaennis, . . . and the Rock-pigeons at Dodona gave oracles from the god,
>
> but people never called them Sibyls. . . . They say the Rock-pigeons are
>
> even earlier than Phemonoe [the first named prophetess at Delphi]; that
>
> they were the first women singers and sang these verses:
>
> 'Zeus was, and is, and shall be, O great Zeus.
>
> Earth raises crops. Cry to the Earth-mother'. (74)

But the songs to the Earth-mother were silenced not long after this hymn was sung by Phaennis and the other "old gray ones." In the year 219 B.C.E., if she was then alive, she would have been an eyewitness to the sacking of the the whole of Dodona by the Aetolians. The priestesses were doubtless killed. The sanctuary was almost immediately restored, but was again decimated by the ever-conquering Romans in 167 B.C.E. (75) For all intents and purposes, the oracle itself seems to have fallen into disuse after this sacking, but the reports are conflicting. "In Augustus's time [63 B.C.E.-14 C.E.] we have Strabo's evidence that the oracle was extinct; . . . [although] we know from Pausanias that Zeus's sacred oak was still alive in the reign of Hadrian [117-38 C.E.]." (76)

A contemporary of Pausanias gives an eye-witness account of the outward signs of the survival and continuing use of the oracle. He "saw it adorned with wreaths and fillets, 'because, like the Delphic tripod, it gave forth oracles'." (77) Evidence of an even later demise of the oak and its oracles is offered by a scholar of the last century, a woman known only as Mrs. Philpot, to whom many of the giants of Classical scholarship often deferred. She informs us that:

> A later writer states that the oracular voices ceased on the felling of the
>
> tree by a certain Illyrian bandit . . . but there is evidence that the tree and
>
> the oracle were still in existence in the middle of the fourth century A.D. (78)

And so, after all of the centuries that bore witness to the violent destruction and desecration of this holy sanctuary, the tree itself remained. It was left to the Christians to destroy the most sacred tree in Greece. Prior to its murder, this ancient oak had stood, speaking its messages in the wind, for many more than two and a half thousand years. The one that stands in its place today was planted by the archaeologists who unearthed the site. (79) No doubt they felt the emptiness in a place that once filled the world with hope.

But the spirit of the oak, and the illuminating wisdom of its brooding doves, lives on. Despite the ravages of patriarchal absorption and destruction, the earliest phases of the religion of the sacred tree have not disappeared without a trace. We cannot always see the evidence that is left behind for us to see, but it is there if we look – and listen. It survives, for example, in the strong etymological evidence, which shows that it was a female divinity, Dione, related to Zeus only by the linguistic connection of the word Dia, meaning "the illuminator," (80) who was the first deity served by the avian chanteurs of Dodona. (81)

Many scholars insist that it was only in the later periods that the "old gray ones" became "associated with Aphrodite or her mother Dione, who was worshipped there as Zeus' consort." (82) It would appear, however, that in view of the rather lowly, earth-bound, position of Zeus the Thunderer at the base of the majestic oak, combined with a thoroughly unbiased scrutiny of the etymological and astronomical evidence, that this is not so. The dove-priestesses were there from the beginning to interpret the dreams of the goddess's suppliants, and to sing the oracles of Dione, 'the illuminator' – "a woodland Great Goddess, otherwise known as Diana." (83)

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There's a place in Britain that still hasn't celebrated Christmas or New Year

mirror.co.uk

There's a place in Britain that still hasn't celebrated Christmas or New Year

- Jan 01, 2015 10:51
- By Paul Cockerton

Foula in Shetland is one of the UK's remotest islands and has a population of just 30

Party-free: Foula in Shetland is still to celebrate Christmas and New Year

One of the country's most remote islands is STILL to celebrate Christmas and New Year.

Foula in Shetland's festive season begins on January 6 and ends seven days later.

It marks Xmas and New Year according to the feast days of the old Julian calendar.

So while the rest of Britain was enjoying a drink last night, Foula was a party-free zone.

Instead the island's six children have to wait patiently for Santa Claus to arrive on 'Yule' on January 6.

The community of just over 30 has a strong Norse tradition of folklore, music and special festivities.

Its inhabitants were the last to speak Norn, a form of old Norse which died out around 1800.

Islanders will gather in one house to celebrate Christmas where they will exchange gifts and greetings.

Crofter Jim Gear said: "Islanders have celebrated these days every since the Georgian Calendar.

"We have carried this long for a long time - it is part of our tradition.

"We are not unique - other parts of the world still celebrate the old calendar.

"When New Year comes we will visit each others' houses."

The island is three and a half miles long by two and a half miles wide.

It got running water in 1982 and full electricity by 1984, supplied by a diesel generator.

Foula - meaning "bird island" in old Norse - was the location for the film The Edge of the World.

The RMS Oceanic was wrecked on the nearby Shaalds of Foula.

See how the rest of the UK celebrated New Year's Eve below.

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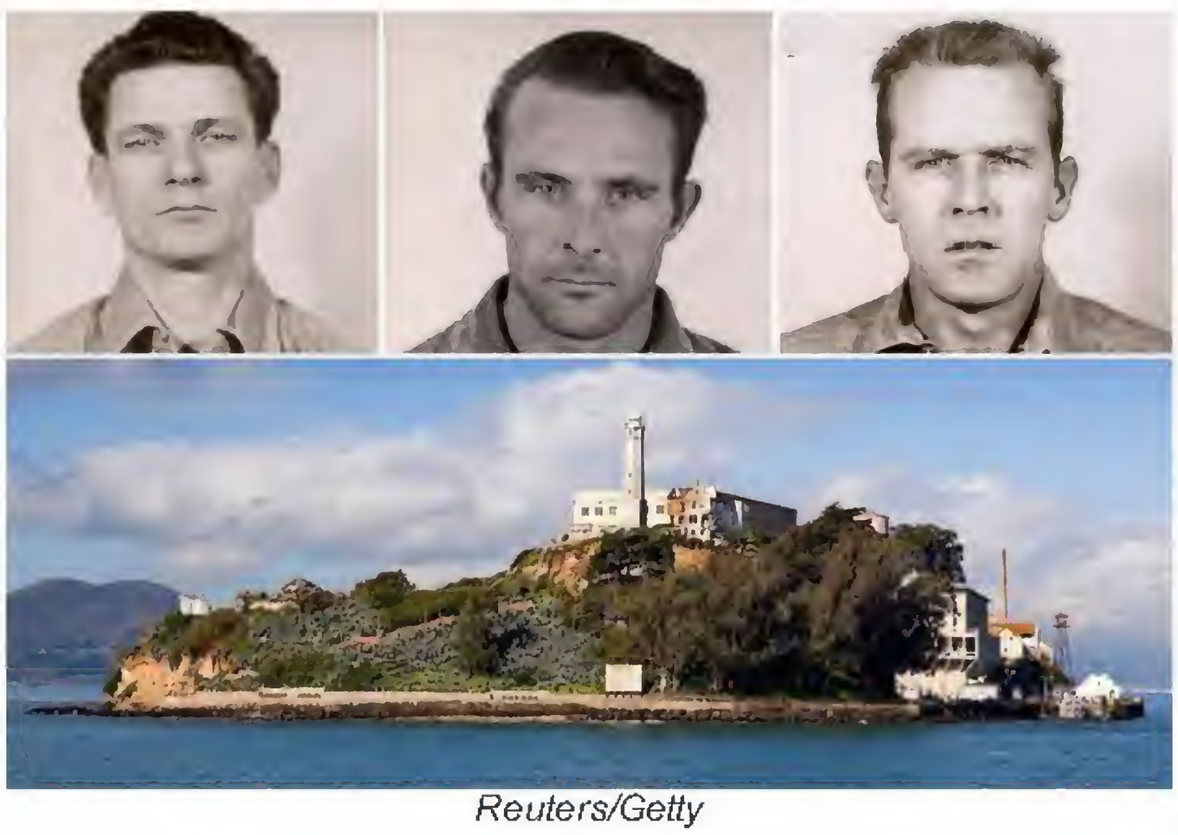
Three escaped Alcatraz convicts may still be alive 52 years after escaping

dailyrecord.co.uk

Three escaped Alcatraz convicts who fled infamous island prison in 1962 may still be alive in their 80s

- Dec 15, 2014 18:57
- By Ian Hughes

IT IS widely believed that Clarence Anglin, John Anglin and Frank Morris died in the escape, but a new study suggests they could have made it.



Reuters/Getty

THREE inmates behind the daring jailbreak which inspired the Clint Eastwood film Escape From Alcatraz could still be alive today - if they set off at exactly 11.30pm.

Clarence Anglin, John Anglin and Frank Morris were never seen again after sailing a makeshift raft from San Francisco's world famous 'escape-proof' prison on June 11, 1962.

It is widely believed they died in the jailbreak, but a new study shows how it's possible they may have survived their ordeal and gone into hiding.

If that were true, then today John and Clarence Anglin would be 84 and 83, and Morris would be 88.

The three bank robbers spent months digging an escape tunnel with metal spoons, then duped guards using fake heads made from soap, toilet paper and hair.

FBI files state they entered the water on an improvised life raft made from coats some time between 8pm and 2am.

According to a new study, the trio had a very slim chance of surviving the cold waters of San Francisco Bay, because the odds were stacked against them.

The new study shows if they had left in the hours either side of 11.30pm, it is likely they died.

None of the men were found after an extensive search of the bay and their fate remains a mystery.

A Dutch team of scientists from Delft University and the research institute Deltares have attempted to shed some light on what might have happened.

FBI

They applied historical tidal data from the night of the escape to a high-performance computer model for simulating the movement of water bodies in deltas and bays.

Originally, the programme, named 3Di, was developed to study the impact of sea-level rise in San Francisco Bay.

The team then released 50 virtual 'boats' every 30 minutes between what would have been 8pm and 4am, from a range of possible escape spots.

Fedor Baart, a simulation specialist at Deltares, explained: "We added a paddling effect to the boats, as we assumed the prisoners would paddle as they got closer to land."

REUTERS

It was found a a rubber boat "leaving Alcatraz at 23.30 would most likely have landed just north of the Golden Gate Bridge".

The model also shows debris in that scenario would probably wash up at Angel Island, exactly where one of the paddles and some personal belongings were found.

If they entered the water later, after 1am, the tide would have reversed, taking the escapees on a different course.

Dr Baart explained they would have been pushed back into the Bay, and sent towards Berkeley and the mouth of the Sacramento River, or pushed south towards Oakland, past Treasure Island.

In both cases they would have spent so much time in the water, they probably would have died of hypothermia.

He added: "The simulations show that if the prisoners had left before 11pm, they would have had absolutely no chance of surviving.

"The strong currents would have taken them out to sea.

"However, if they left between 11pm and midnight, there is a good chance they reached Horseshoe Bay north of the Golden Gate Bridge."

Getty

The team produced a 'worst case scenario', in which the prisoners do not paddle, and a 'best case scenario', in which they paddle northwards at a speed of 25cm per second.

“Of course, this doesn’t prove this was what really happened, but the latest and best hydraulic modelling information indicates that it was certainly possible," said Dr Baart.

"We also suspect the prisoners may have left later than has always been assumed because an escape at 10pm doesn’t fit in with where the paddle was found."

The team's findings will presented this week at the American Geophysical Union Fall Meeting, which is hosted in San Francisco.

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18Jul2014

by Zack Davisson

Yoshitoshi_Ogiku

Night Stories of Takemata

Translated from Takemata Yawa; 1557

Around the time after the Kakitsu Revolt (1441), there lived a man named Odagaki Shumesuke, a chief retainer in a prestigious family in the Hatama country of Aoyama (Modern day Himeji city). Oda lived in a magnificent mansion in the mountains. In his household was a beautiful serving girl named Hanano, who was the object of many desires.

A young samurai named Kasadera Shinemon pursued Hanano, writing her love letter after love letter; but she always refused him.

One of the great treasures of the Odagaki family were five precious abalone drinking cups that they had received from the lord of the clan. One day Odagaki noticed that one was missing. He questioned Hanano about the missing cup, but she could only express her surprise. In a rage, Odagaki tortured Hanano, demanding the return of the priceless heirloom.

In truth, the cup had been hidden by Kasadera in revenge for Hanano's repeated rejections. Kasadera eagerly joined in the persecution, beating Hanano severely while demanding return of the cup. Finally, while bound and hanging from a pine tree, Hanano died.

From then on, the terrible power of Hanano's rage could be felt at the mansion every night, and the tree from which she died became known as the Hanging Pine.

*Kunichika_100_Roles_Baiko_*

The Plate Mansion of Ushigome

Translated from Tosei Chie Kagami; 1712

A samurai named Hattori lived in the Ushigome area of Edo. His wife was surpassingly jealous. One day the wife discovered that her husband's mistress had broken one of the ten heirloom plates that the house had from Nanking, rendering them unsuitable for service to guests. The wife would not take money, but insisted that the mistress replace the broken plate. As the plates were quite old and rare, the wife knew this was an impossible demand.

Until the matter was settled, the wife had the mistress confined to a cell. She was given neither food nor drink, and the wife expected she

would starve to death. However, on the fifth day the wife checked in and found the mistress still alive. Out of patience, the wife took matters into her own hand and strangled the mistress in her cell. She then paid to have her body taken from the house. To everyone's surprise, the mistress suddenly revived insider her coffin and begged for release. Exasperated, the wife paid four strong men to strangle the mistress, and bury her body in an unmarked grave. With the deed done, the wife thought she was at last free of her rival.

But suddenly, the wife's throat began to swell. She could no longer swallow food, and even had difficulty breathing. A doctor came to attend to her, but it was too late. The doctor could find no cause for her condition, and decided it must have been the onryō of the mistress coming for revenge. Later, it was found that the four men who had killed the mistress had died in the same way.

Hokusai_Sarayashiki

A Doubtful Record of the Plate Mansion

Translated from Sarayashiki Bengiroku; 1785

The Yoshida Mansion sits in the 5th ward of Ushigome-Gomon. The lot on which it was built was once the home to the palace of Lady Sen before she made her journey to Akasaka in Edo in 1626. After that, another building once stood in that lot which was burned down to the ground—the home of the minor lord Aoyama Harima.

In the house of Aoyama a young girl named Okiku worked as a maidservant. On the second day of the second year of Jōō (Jan 2nd, 1653), Okiku accidently broke one of the ten precious plates that were the heirloom of the Aoyama clan. Harima's wife was furious, and said that since Okiku had broken one of the ten plates it was fair to cut off one of Okiku's ten fingers in return. The middle finger on her right hand was chosen, and Okiku was confined to a cell until the punishment could be carried out.

During the night, Okiku managed to slip her bonds and escape from her cell. She ran outside and threw herself into an unused well, drowning at the bottom.

The next night, from the bottom of the well came a woman's voice. "1 … 2 … " Soon, the sound of her voice could be heard echoing throughout the mansion, counting the plates. Everyone was so terrified their hair stood up all over their bodies.

Harima's wife was pregnant, and when she gave birth her child was missing the middle finger on its right hand. News of this made it back to the Imperial Court, and the cursed Aoyama family were forced to forfeit their territories and holdings.

The sound of the counting of the plates continued. The Imperial Court held special ceremonies to calm Okiku's spirit, but all in vain. At last, they sent a holy man to the cleanse the spirit. That night, the holy man waited inside the house. He waited patiently as voice counted " 8 … 9 …" and then he suddenly shouted "10!"

Okiku's yūrei was heard to whisper "Oh, how glad I am" before she disappeared.

Translator's Note

I just finished editing the Okiku chapter for my upcoming book Yurei: The Japanese Ghost and figured I would post these translations as a little preview! There is lots more about Okiku in the book itself.

Okiku is one of the most interesting yurei in Japan. She is a true folktale, with multiple versions spread across the country. Anywhere there is an old castle and a well, there is a legend of Okiku. She isn't always named Okiku, and she isn't always counting plates, but the same details are there.

Here are three translations of some different versions of the legends. I started with the oldest, so you can see how the tale has changed over time. Over the course of learning about her, Okiku changed from a yurei I thought was kind of boring, to one of my favorites. She is the most Japanese of Japan's famous ghosts.

And I hope people aren't getting too sick of my sales pitch, but if you can PLEASE preorder my book! I cannot emphasize enough how important preorders are going to be for my book's overall success. If you enjoy my translations and articles on hyakumonogatari.com, the best way to support the site and show appreciation is to preorder a copy of my book! Thank you!!!

1. Leah
Aug 02, 2014 @ 08:37:52

Okiku was one of the first Japanese ghost stories I heard, and I've seen it as a 落語 and have been to お菊井戸 at Himeiji. Just preordered your book, too! :)

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Three Year Old Reincarnate Helps Convict His Past Life Murderer

By Ritoban Mukherjee on June 2, 2014 whofortedblog.com

In the book *Children Who Have Lived Before: Reincarnation Today*German therapist Trutz Hardo recounts the story of a three-year-old living in the Golan Heights region near the borders of Syria and Israel, who is said to have memories of his past life. Hardo was told of this tale by Dr. Eli Lasch, who was incharge of developing a medical system in Gaza during a 1960 Israeli operation.

This boy, a member of the Druze ethnic group, was born with a long red birthmark on his head. Given the fact that the Druze are active believers of reincarnation, his community believed this to be a mark from his previous birth. As soon as he was old enough to speak, he began revealing memories of his past life. His parents, therefore, took him to the alleged home from his previous life. Once there, the boy even remembered his past life name, and it soon turned out that a man of the same name had gone missing since four years in the village.

The boy already had vivid memories of being slaughtered with an axe in his previous life, and now fully remembering his killer's name, confronted him, who, although scared, denied having murdered anyone.

However, the boy went further to reveal to the village elders the place where his dead body had been buried. There was found a man's skeleton, along with the axe, the murder weapon. Now when confronted with evidence, the killer confessed to his crime.

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Time travellers outsmart the NSA

6 Jan 2014 at 04:01, Richard Chirgwin
6 Jan 2014 at 04:01,

theregister.co.uk

The Tardis in a field

If there are time travellers around, they're being careful not to leave their fingerprints on the Internet.

That's the conclusion in a paper published at Arxiv, put together by Michigan Technical University physics professor Robert Nemiroff and PhD candidate Teresa Wilson. They searched the Internet for "prescient" signatures – that is, information in posts containing knowledge that didn't exist at the time it came to be posted, whether on blogs, social media, or other documents indexed by Google.

They focussed on mentions of Comet ISON, and Pope Francis, as labels that would stand out if they turned up out of their proper chronology. Each of these was a sufficiently unique search term to eliminate false positives, and had a clear start date (for ISON, September 21 2012; for Pope Francis, 16 March 2013).

While the aim – "can we find time travellers on the Internet" – sounds silly, the shortcomings of date-restricted search on different platforms is interesting.

Google proved a weak tool for identifying "prescient" information. While Google provides restriction of search by date range, the cycling of new links into old news stories spoils it: a "prescient" hit in the search results (for example, a story about Pope Frances dated before his election) means that an "other news" story using the search terms has appeared automatically in a sidebar to a much older story.

Facebook, they write, was inadequate for the search, as was Google+, which doesn't order searches of posts by date. For the purpose of giving an accurate date to historical posts, Twitter turned out to be the best-performing tool the researchers looked at.

Getting desperate, the researchers have also asked time travellers, if they exist, to post to the hashtag "#IcanChangeThePast2" or "#IcannotChangeThePast2", on or before August 2013. At the time of writing, no such posts have turned up. ®

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Tire swing kills man at East Village playground

Dale W. Eisinger , Caitlin Nolan

nydailynews.com

Aleim Perkins, 39, was killed by a tire swing in Tompkins Square Park on Monday.

A fun outing in Tompkins Square Park turned tragic when a man died after a tire swing struck him in the face, police said Tuesday.

Aleim Perkins 39, took his niece to the East Village playground about 4 p.m. Monday and while the girl was playing, he began swinging an empty tire swing, cops said.

The swing smacked the Harlem man in the face, knocking him unconscious and causing bleeding from the mouth, police said.

Emergency responders rushed him to Beth Israel Hospital where he died.

Parkgoers who saw the freak accident were stunned."I don't know if you've ever seen someone totally knocked out from a punch, but that's what it was like," said Ori Carino, 32, who was at the park with his son.

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Topless Femen activist grabs baby Jesus

Topless Femen activist grabs baby Jesus

Published: 26 Dec 2014 08:39 GMT+01:00

An activist from the feminist group Femen bared her breasts in St Peter's Square on Christmas Day and rushed the Nativity scene, grabbing the baby Jesus figurine.

A Vatican police officer wearing a black cape was quick to arrest the blonde activist and wrest the figurine away from her.

The words "God Is Woman" were daubed in large letters on her chest.

Although the incident occurred well after Pope Francis delivered his Christmas message from the balcony of St Peter's Basilica, thousands of pilgrims were still in the famous square.

Femen has staged similar stunts at the Vatican, such as a protest last month over an imminent visit by the pope to the European Parliament.

The three Femen members were wearing only leather mini-skirts and flower garlands in their hair, and one had the slogan "Pope is not a politician" emblazoned across her chest.

On November 24th, the day before the pope's visit, a topless Femen activist mounted the altar of the Strasbourg cathedral.

The movement that began in Ukraine to protest the former pro-Kremlin regime also opposes the Catholic Church's positions against abortion and gay marriage.

Their activists often stage protests in places of worship.

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When Selfies With Monkeys Go Very, Very Wrong...

Huffington Post UK | By Sara C Nelson huffingtonpost.co.uk

Posted: 15/12/2014 15:15 GMT Updated: 15/12/2014 15:59 GMT

OK, we're calling it: the selfie is over. The next big thing is the selfie-gone-oh-so-very-wrong.

As demonstrated absolutely perfectly in this sequence of pictures of a tourist attempting to capture herself and a monkey in the same frame.

Believed to be taken in the Sacred Monkey Forest Sanctuary in Ubud, Bali, it was shared by Reddit user ThatGuy1331 over the weekend.

Selfie time!

Conversation about the images ranged from branding the monkey in question "a complete asshole", to arguing over whether a human could fight off a simian attack to advice "never to show your teeth to most animals. It's a sign of aggression".

Wonderful stuff.

Via Imgur Via Imgur

At one with nature... but wait...

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By Charlie Hintz on April 3, 2013

The luxury cruise ship SS Morro Castle burning at sea in 1934

The luxury cruise ship *SS Morro Castle* burning at sea in 1934

The *SS Morro Castle* was a luxury cruise ship launched in 1930, named for the Morro Castle fortress that guards the entrance to Havana Bay. Her final journey began on September 5th, 1934. On the evening of September 7th Captain Robert Willmott had his dinner delivered to his quarters. Shortly after, he complained of stomach trouble, and was soon dead of an apparent heart attack.

A fire was detected in a storage locker within the First Class Writing Room on B Deck around 2:50am on September 8th. Within 30 minutes the fire had engulfed the ship and plunged it into darkness by burning through the power cables. Radio contact was cut off after only one SOS was sent. The wheelhouse lost the ability to steer the ship at about the same time, as the fire burned through the hydraulic lines.

Passengers and crew began to abandoned ship. The deck was filled with thick, acrid smoke and the boards were hot to the touch. *Jump or burn* became the ultimatum. Only six of the ship's twelve lifeboats were launched. Although the combined capacity of these boats was 408, they carried only 85. Many escaping passengers died due to lack of knowledge of proper life preserver use. As they hit the water, many were knocked unconscious and drowned, or their necks were broken upon impact.

Rescue ships eventually arrived to pull passengers and bodies from the water. As news of the disaster spread along the Jersey coast by telephone and radio stations, local citizens assembled on the coastline to retrieve the dead, nurse the wounded, and try to unite families that had been scattered between different rescue boats that landed on the New Jersey beaches.

By mid-morning, the *Morro Castle* was totally abandoned and its burning hull drifted ashore, coming to a stop in shallow water off Asbury Park, New Jersey, late that afternoon at almost the exact spot that the *New Era* had wrecked and lost 284 lives in 1854. The fires continued to smolder for the next two days and in the end, 135 passengers and crew (out of a total of 549) were lost. The ship was declared a total loss, and its charred hulk was finally towed away from the Asbury Park shoreline on March 14th, 1935.

Because of its proximity to the boardwalk and the Asbury Park Convention Hall pier while it waited to be scrapped, it was possible to wade out and touch the wreck. It was treated as a sightseeing destination, complete with stamped penny souvenirs and postcards for sale.

Hundreds of people climbed over the breakwater to get a closer look at the burning vessel so near to the beach. Among these were the Author, Paul C. Morris, in the photograph above with his brother Bill and Mother, Martha Morris in the far right side of the picture. *Photo by the late Paul C. Morris Sr.*

Wreckage of the SS Morro Castle on the New Jersey shoreline

Wreckage of the SS Morro Castle on the New Jersey shoreline

Wreckage of the SS Morro Castle on the New Jersey shoreline

In the inquiry that followed the disaster, Chief Radio Operator George White Rogers was made out to be a hero because, having been unable to get a clear order from the bridge, he sent a distress call on his own accord amidst life-threatening conditions. Later, however, suspicion was directed at Rogers when he was convicted of attempting to murder his police colleague with an incendiary device. His crippled victim, Vincent 'Bud' Doyle, spent the better part of his life attempting to prove that Rogers had set the *Morro Castle* fire as well. In 1954, Rogers was convicted of murdering a neighboring couple for money, and he died three and a half years later in prison.

Wreckage of the SS Morro Castle on the New Jersey shoreline

Wreckage of the SS Morro Castle on the New Jersey shoreline

Wreckage of the SS Morro Castle on the New Jersey shoreline

Wreckage of the SS Morro Castle on the New Jersey shoreline

Officially, the cause of the fire was never determined.

Related

About Charlie Hintz

Cult of Weird founder and curator of the bizarre. Send weird news, photos and videos to: info@cultofweird.com

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Wreckage of the SS Morro Castle on the New Jersey shoreline

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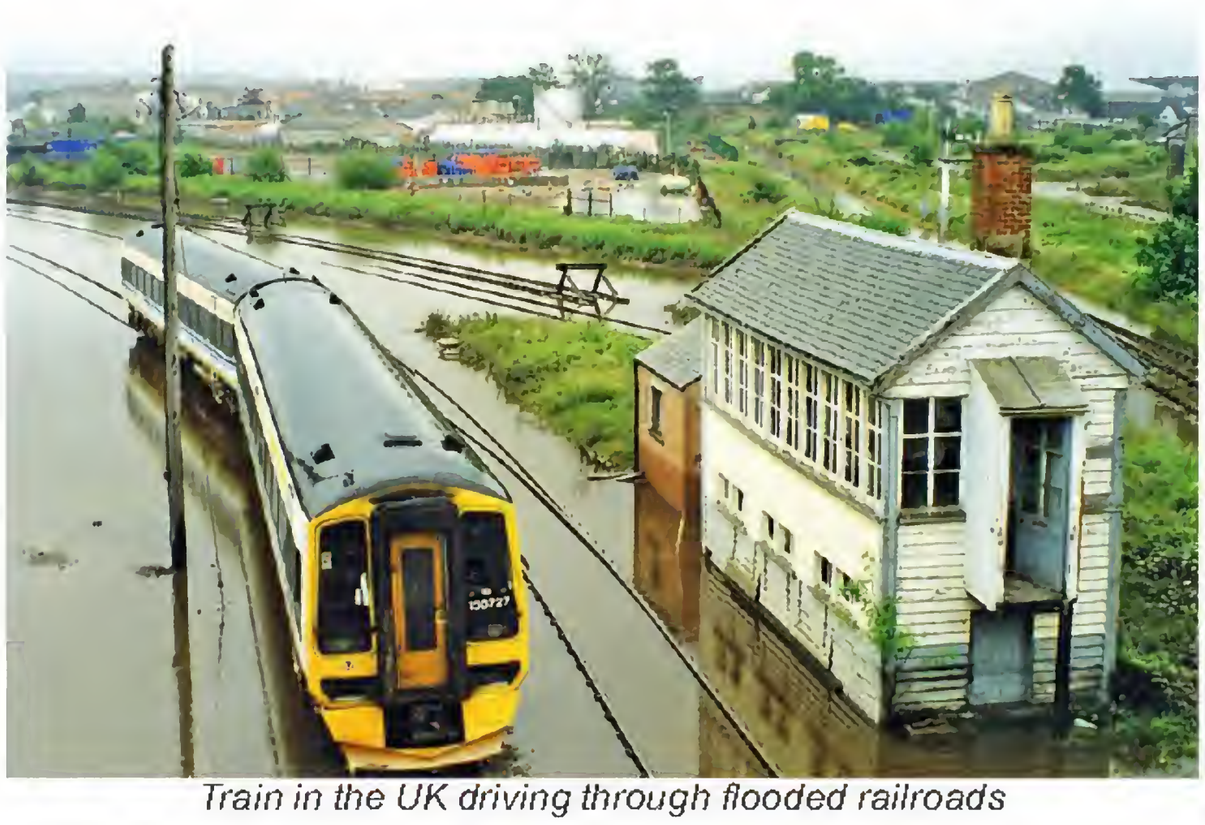
Troll Runs After Train in Flooded England! - Cryptozoology News

By Cryptozoology News February 9th, 2014



Train in the UK driving through flooded railroads

LONDON (Cryptozoology News) — As the residents of flood-devastated Southern England brace for the incoming monster storm "Ruth", another person from the region is dealing with a different sort of nightmare.

The 25-year-old student, who spoke on condition of anonymity, told Cryptozoology News that he saw "a troll looking creature" running erratically across the flooded fields in farmland last week on a train headed to London.

"I came home to the village to visit my parents before getting back to London," he said. "I planned on staying there longer, but I was afraid the trains would be cancelled."

On his way back to the country's capital, he explained, an incredible occurrence took place.

"You have got to see it to believe it. I fell asleep a few times, I was *zonked*. When I wake up, the sun is almost down, I look through the window on my left and I thought *I'd lost the plot*. I see a three meter tall fat bloke running through the soggy fields, water up his knees. I was *gobsmacked*."

Then things got weirder. As the strange figure approached the slow running train, the witness was able to observe its face at close range.

"I thought it was a person…until it got closer to the train. We were going at a very slow speed because of the surrounding water. It wasn't a man. I don't know what that was but it had hair all over the body, and a bald face and chest. The eyes reminded me of a gorilla's but it had long ears like a wolf, and short white horns. I wasn't sure if I was still dreaming."

Other passengers on the train also saw the creature, he said. "I remember talking to a young boy and his mum. There weren't many people traveling that day, it's usually quite empty during the week."

Then the train allegedly sped up and the creature was left behind. "No, I wasn't dreaming mate. I also know what a bear looks like and it looked more like a troll. Remember, from the Lord of the Rings?"

The man said no pictures or videos of the sighting were taken. “Well mate, I was quite surprised, like I said. You just don’t have got any time to reach your phone and take a picture. Things happen fast, that’s what people don’t get. So, unless you are a trained journalist or similar…and you are expecting something to happen, you’ve got nothing,” he explained.

Troll becoming a mountain. Public domain

According to Norse and Scandinavian folklore, trolls are magical beings that live in the caves of rocks and mountains. They are not fond of humans and tend to avoid them as much as possible, though sometimes they imitate their behavior. These creatures are nocturnal and supposedly turn into rocks if exposed to sunlight, erecting new landmarks to be found and named by people later.

“Friends and other people say it’s rubbish, but I know what I saw,” the man said.

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Two sons get mother beaten to death by occultist for good luck - Hindustan Times

20141230 hindustantimes.com

hindustantimes Hin **Two sons get mother beaten to death by occultist for good luck**

PTI Nashik, Maharashtra, December 30, 2014
First Published: 22:08 IST(30/12/2014) | Last Updated: 22:14 IST(30/12/2014)

A woman was allegedly beaten to death in Nashik after her two sons consented to have her 'sacrificed' to bring them good luck.

Over the last two days, Ghoti police has arrested ten people, including the two brothers, for the murder of Budhabai Dore (65), resident of Mokhada in Thane district.

The murder took place at Take-Harsh in tribal-dominated Trimbakeshwar tehsil of Nashik district sometime around Diwali, assistant police inspector Suresh Manore of Ghoti police in the Nashik district said on Tuesday.

The brothers -- Kashinath and Govind Dore -- were not happy with their circumstances and consulted Bachchi-bai Narayan Khadke (42), a woman occultist, based in Take-Harsh, on the advice of their sister Rahibai Pingle.

The occultist told the brothers that they needed to sacrifice both their mother and sister for change of luck.

The two then took both the women to Khadke who allegedly beat Budhabai to death, while Rahibai managed to escape. Khadke later removed the victim's eyes, and buried her body at a nearby spot.

The incident came to light a few days ago when Bhagwan Madhe, a local social worker, alerted the police.

Police arrested the occultist, who also confessed to have murdered another woman in a similar ritual sacrifice in the past, on Monday. Kashinath and Govind were arrested on Tuesday.

A case under the Indian Penal Code and Maharashtra Prevention and Eradication of Human Sacrifice and other Inhuman, Evil and Aghori Practises and Black Magic Act, 2013, has been registered.

District superintendent of police Sanjay Mohite visited Ghoti police station this evening to take stock of the probe.

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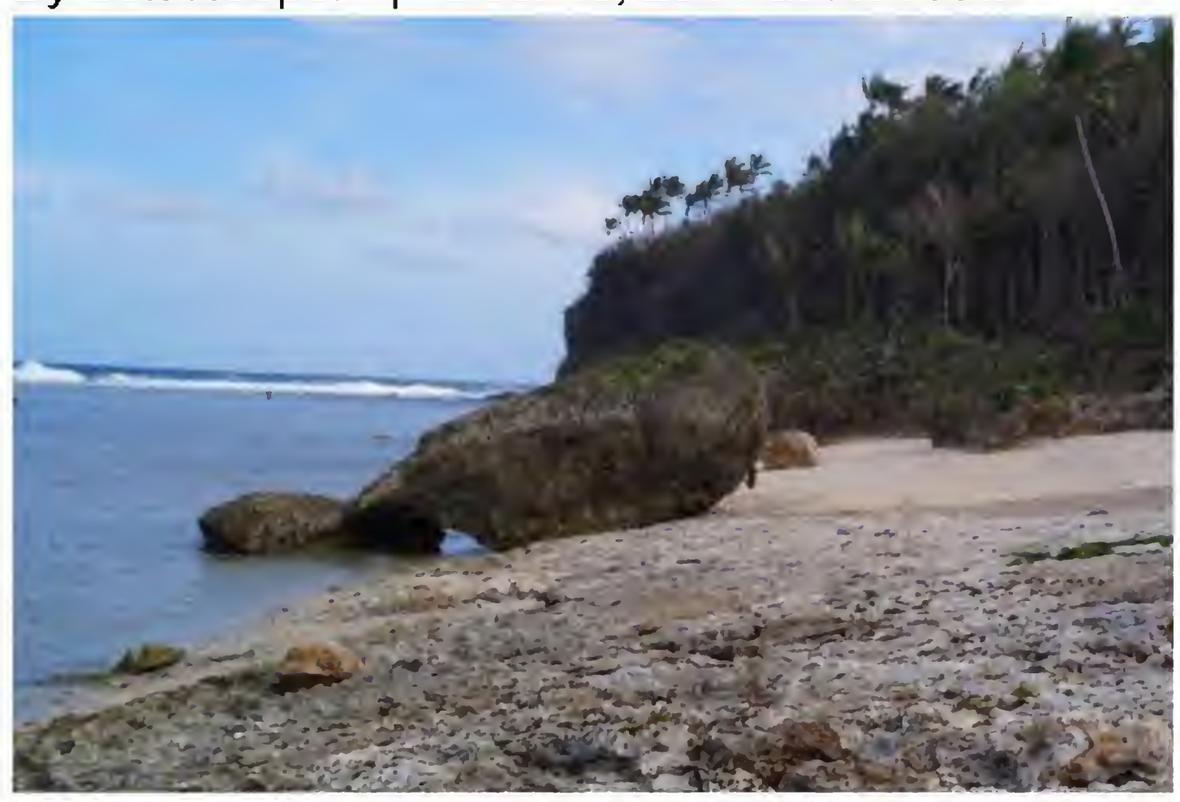
Typhoon Haiyan moved a 177-ton boulder 150 feet

upi.com

Supertyphoon moved 177-ton boulder 150 feet

University of Cologne and University of the Philippines researchers said the boulder is the largest ever documented to have been moved by a storm.

By Ben Hooper | Dec. 19, 2014 at 7:51 AM



This 177-ton boulder was shifted about 150 feet by Supertyphoon Haiyan. Photo courtesy Max Engel/University of Cologne

SAN FRANCISCO, Dec. 19 (UPI) -- Supertyphoon Haiyan set a world record when it touched down in the Philippines by moving a 177-ton boulder a distance of about 150 feet.

Max Engel, a geoscientist at the University of Cologne in Germany, and colleagues from his college and the University of the Philippines' Marine Science Institute said they looked at satellite photos from before and after the typhoon's landfall in the Philippines in November 2013 and determined the boulder, weighing more than 25 adult African elephants, had been moved about 150 feet along a beach by the Haiyan's tsunami-like waves.

The researchers, who presented their paper, "Storm Surge of Supertyphoon Haiyan (7–9 Nov 2013) on Samar (Philippines) Moved the Largest Boulder Ever Documented for a Recent Storm," Tuesday at the American Geophysical Union's fall meeting in San Francisco, said the boulder is the largest on record to be shifted by a storm.

Engel and his colleagues said their findings suggest other boulder movements associated with tsunamis may have been caused by superstorms.

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U.S. agency infiltrated Cuba's hip-hop scene, U.S. taxpayers paid millions for "stupid" covert op

Xeni Jardin at 2:34 pm Fri, Dec 12, 2014

boingboing.net

A 2008 photo by Melisa Riviere shows Bian Rodriguez, left, and Aldo Rodriguez, right, members of Los Aldeanos in Havana. Documents obtained by The Associated Press show that a U.S. agency infiltrated Cuba's hip-hop scene, recruiting unwitting rappers to spark a youth movement against the government.

Don't miss the big Associated Press investigative feature out this week on USAID's massive, costly, unethical hip-hop covert op flop.

"For more than two years, the U.S. agency secretly infiltrated Cuba's underground hip-hop movement, recruiting unwitting rappers to spark a youth movement against the government, according to documents obtained by The Associated Press."

USAID, or The United States Agency for International Development, is the federal agency primarily responsible for administering civilian foreign aid.

The idea was to manipulate Cuban hip-hop artists into breaking "the information blockade," and to build a network of youth seeking "social change," the documents reveal. "But the operation was amateurish and profoundly unsuccessful."

> The hip-hop operation was conceived by one of USAID's largest contractors, Creative Associates International, using a team of Serbian music promoters. The Washington-based contractor also led other efforts aimed at undermining Cuba's communist government, including a secret Cuban Twitter text-messaging service and an operation that sent in young, inexperienced Latin American "tourists" to recruit a new generation of activists.

That USAID contractor, Creative Associates International, was paid millions to try and pull off this wacky plot.

Here are the documents, here's the investigation, and here's the reaction from the Cuban government.

> The U.S. plan called for contractors to recruit dozens of Cuban musicians for projects disguised as cultural initiatives but really aimed at stoking a movement of fans to challenge the government. They filmed TV shows and set up a social network on the island to connect some 200 musicians and artists who would be encouraged to start a social movement. Artists were flown to Europe ostensibly for concerts and video workshops, but the real aim was to groom them as activists.

USAID's sneaky infiltration of Cuba's hip-hop subculture to spark a youth movement against the Cuban government was "reckless" and "stupid," Senator Patrick Leahy said after the AP revealed the operation.

Yep.

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UK furries found guilty of murder plot

Posted by Alexander Grey on Thu 30 Jul 2009 - 00:33

Christopher Monks and Shaun Skarnes, who have been found guilty with conspiracy to murder

The case, as first reported on back in February, of two furries charged with conspiracy to murder has been picked up again in the last week as the two were put to trial by Preston's Crown Court.

Christopher Monks and Shaun Skarnes, known as Rox Yin and Kyra respectively, have both been charged with two counts of conspiracy to murder.

It has emerged that the intended victims were to be Monks' parents, whom he described as being overly-protective. Monks' chatted online with Skarnes about how best to kill them, and devised a plan to do so. In return for murdering his parents, Monks' would allow Skarnes to bite his penis off.

The plot was only foiled when Mr Monks awoke with Skarnes brandishing a kitchen knife, he suffered minor injuries prior to his wife - Elizabeth - managed to calm Skarnes down and call the police.

Mr and Mrs Monks however remained supportive of their son, citing his autism as the cause of his actions and not actual murderous intent.

They are due to be sentenced in September.

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Report: Ukraine military dolphins to switch nationalities, join Russian navy

By Faith Karimi , CNN
March 27, 2014 – Updated 1141 GMT (1941 HKT)

cnn.com

(CNN) -- Just when you thought this divorce couldn't get any messier.

Weeks after Russia annexed Ukraine's Crimea region, it plans to take custody of dolphins in the nation as well.

Not just any dolphins. These highly trained military mammals detect risks such as sea mines or enemy scuba divers trying to slip through. Sea mines are sophisticated weapons that can sink ships and other watercraft.

"The combat dolphin program in the Crimean city of Sevastopol will be preserved and redirected toward the interests of the Russian navy," state-run Russian news agency RIA Novosti reported Thursday.

Dolphins are a crucial part of open-water security. They detect sounds and objects in murky waters that human beings can't, making them uniquely effective at highlighting dangers on the sea floor.

Harnessing the military power of animal intelligence

Ukraine was using outdated military equipment for the dolphin program and planned to disband it next month, RIA Novosti said.

The Ukraine Defense Ministry told CNN that the nation has an ocean dolphin facility, but declined to provide details, saying they're classified.

The dolphin program dates to the 1960s, when Russia and Ukraine were part of the Soviet Union, but was handed over to Kiev after independence.

The U.S. Navy in San Diego also trains dolphins and sea lions to help protect its assets and find dangerous objects underwater.

Tensions between Moscow and Kiev have escalated since Russia reclaimed the Crimea region after a referendum this month that overwhelmingly supported the annexation. The United States and its allies have pledged to isolate Russia for its actions.

Ukraine also has combat sea lions that operate under the same base. It's unclear whether they'll be barking allegiances to Moscow or Kiev.

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Reporter: James Williams Reporter

Email: james.williams@newburynews.co.uk
Contact: 01635 886633

Curridge Creature_2

MOVE over the Loch Ness Monster, Beast of Bodmin and Essex Lion, there is a new fantastical beast in town and it goes by the name of the 'Creature from Curridge'.

The bushy-tailed, long necked creature was spotted by West Berkshire businessman, Don Prater, at about 4.55pm on October 3.

The 67-year-old, who owns Yarn Fest at Hillier Garden Centre in Hermitage with his wife, Christine, was walking his two-year-old Border Collie called Bozzy when he spotted the animal he has dubbed the 'Creature from Curridge'.

"I hadn't been drinking!" stressed Mr Prater. "I was walking the dog along the passageway behind the Women's Institute Hall in Curridge towards Hermitage.

"After the footpath bends left, about 25 yards ahead of us were two animals. One of the animals looked like a domestic cat but the other one stunned me. It was a dark or grey colour. The height of its head was about two foot but it had the head of a deer. The neck was about eight to ten inches long and thin like a swan's neck. The body was a cross between a cat and a dog. It had a bushy tail. Everything about it was wrong.

"The cat went off into the undergrowth then the other animal starred at us, took a couple of turns and wandered off into the hedgerows."

Mr Prater said he has canvassed opinion in Curridge but no-one has seen a similar creature lurking in the undergrowth.

"I don't have an explanation, but it was real," he said. "I have never seen anything like that before."

General consensus in the Newbury Weekly News newsroom is that the creature, depicted in Mr Prater's sketch, which is pictured, looks like an alpaca or llama.

Both Bucklebury Farm Park and Beale Park, Lower Basildon, told the NewburyToday that all their respective animals are accounted for, so the 'Creature from Curridge' could not have escaped from those establishments.

Spokeswoman for Bucklebury Farm Park, Elizabeth Peplow said: "The closest we have to an alpaca are our two lovely llamas, Twinkle and Buttons, who are grazing happily in their paddock."

Meanwhile spokesman for the British Big Cats Society, Danny Bamping said: "There have been sightings of such a creature around Berkshire, but it does not resemble a cat. To me it looks like a mini, furry Loch Ness Monster!

"I would suggest that Mr Prater reports his sighting on our website."

For more information about the British Big Cats Society, visit http://www.britishbigcats.org

Comments

The comments have not been moderated.

The views expressed in the contents above are those of our users and do not necessarily reflect the views of newburytoday.co.uk or publishers Newbury News Limited.

1. **Luci**

October 15, 2012 10:57 pm

We saw it too!

On the 18th August while driving back from Cold Ash towards Hermitage past the Downs School, we saw what my husband thought was a Wolverine (indigenous to America). Taller than a Badger, long bow-legged, long tail and definitely sinister looking. When we told people what we saw, they quickly dismissed it as a Honey Badger, but my husband has experienced both and he replied, "That was no Badger."

We regret not taking a picture, but this story has helped validate that we weren't hallucinating.

My husband still thinks it's a North American Wolverine, not the Hugh Jackman kind...

2. **joanne6175**

October 16, 2012 9:42 am

Looks like an alpaca?

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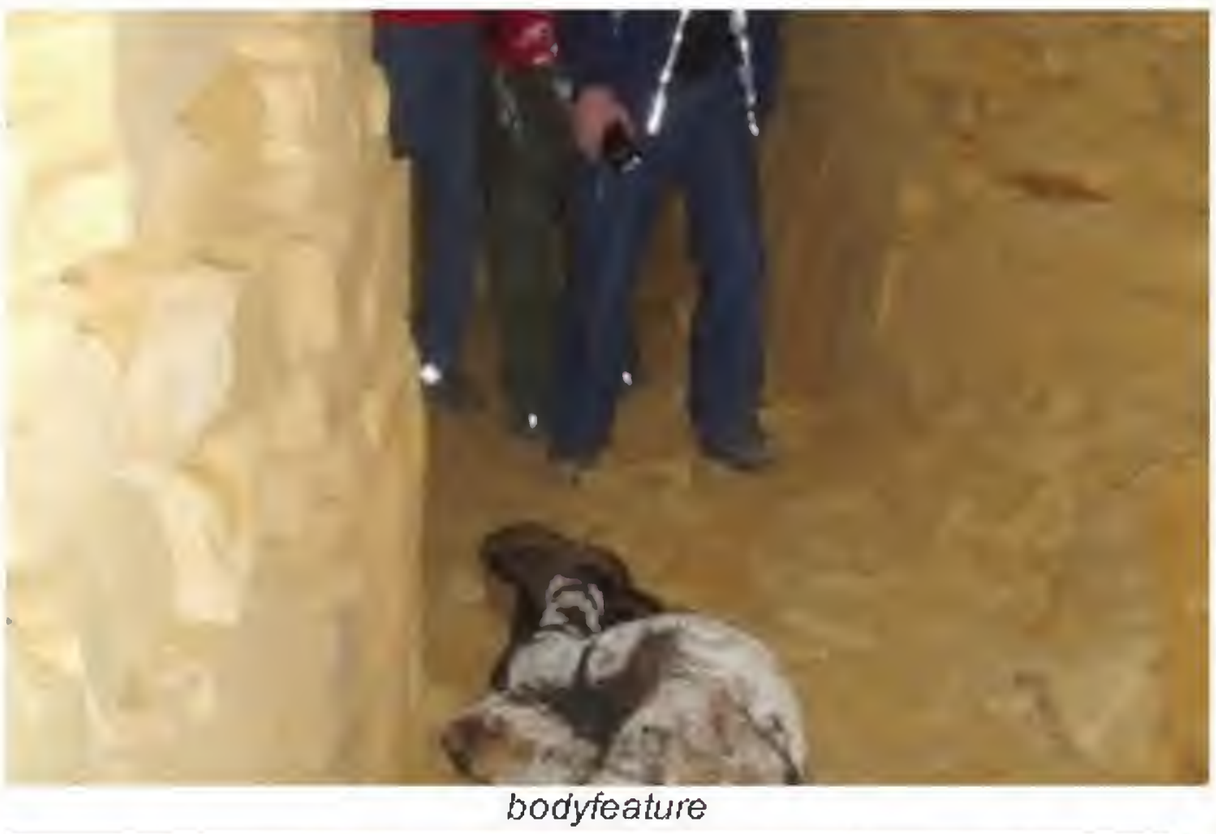
Urban Explorers make gruesome discovery in Odessa Catacombs

By Greg Newkirk on December 29, 2014 whofortedblog.com



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Time for a public service announcement: while secret, underground parties that happen in places like the off-limits areas of the Paris Catacombs look like a blast, they're illegal for a reason. Case in point – it's really, really, really easy to get lost, as one poor girl discovered after a party in Odessa.

Odessa, just outside of Ukraine's capital, Kiev, is home to one of the largest catacombs in the entire world. With over 1,500 miles of subterranean tunnels, Odessa's catacombs even beat out the well-known Paris Catacombs in terms of length. After a nearly a century of mining operations beneath the city, and a stint as a WWII hiding place, the government officially sealed all entrances to the tunnels in 1980. Well, they tried to, at least.

Despite the best efforts of officials to keep adventurous folks out of the Catacombs, the tunnels proved to be a popular spot for teenagers to hold their wild parties far from the prying eyes of adults. Unfortunately, the extreme isolation meant that while you could party in peace, your chances of of dying in peace are also increased exponentially.

In 2009, an urban explorer known only as Eugene took to UER.com to share a morbid discovery that he'd made deep below the Odessa streets.

From the thread:

As I said earlier, a lot of people lost and even dead under Odessa. Maybe this

193fbe19eeaf

photo will shock you. It`s a dead body of the 19-years old girl, who has lost the right way in the maze. Her body was found only after 2 years…

6a4f5f5cc28d

…It's a very sad story. She went with her friends into katakombs to celebrate a 2005s new year. It was a very big bad-experiment group, so probably when in the morning drunk group left katakombs, they forgot girl inside. It was a very long and painful death! She couldn't find an entrance. She was taken out only in the end of 2007 and buried.

I made this photo in April 2005. After that I called police, but they did not want to go inside. Her body was far from the exit.

Let the sad story be a warning to all would-be urban explorers – if you decide to crawl into the Earth's hidden places, make sure you go with a friend, tell others where you are, and don't stray from the path.

d55eaec23764

On the other hand, you could always play it safe and take an official, guided tour of the Paris Catacombs, Capuchin Catacombs, or the Seattle Underground Tunnels.

All images via UER

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What is Urglaawe?

Urglaawe is a tradition within Heathenry that is derived from the living Deitsch (Pennsylvania German or Pennsylvania Dutch) folk culture.

Broken down and translated, "der Urglaawe" literally means "the original faith" in the Deitsch language. Our focus is on the pre-Christian religious and cultural undertones that still flow through the Pennsylvania German culture. Although the Pennsylvania Germans did not exist as a distinct ethnic group during the pre-Christian era, our ancestors brought with them many Heathen practices that continued to flourish here after the Diaspora into the Americas.

Practices such as Braucherei and Hexerei as well as folklore and folk medicine will shed more light on the way our ancestors practiced the original faith. However, we are not striving to recreate the past as much as we are working to organize the Heathen elements of the Deitsch culture into a coherent and functional spiritual and religious syste with relevance in today's world.

We are neither "Folkish" nor "Universalist." Instead, Urglaawe kindreds and freeholds build their communities with those with whom values are shared. We do not tolerate racism, bigotry, homophobia, or sexism as these forces are destructive to the self and to community.

Although we view Heathenry through the lens of the Deitsch culture, one need not be of Deitsch descent to hear the call of the gods and goddesses. Interest in Urglaawe is growing in many US states, in Canada, and even well outside of the US.

For those who are new to new to Urglaawe, the best place to begin is on Distelfink Sippschaft's Resource page at:

http://site.distelfink.org/Resources.html

Die Urglaawisch Sippschaft vum Distelfink is a non-profit organization under 501(c)3 of the IRS code.

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Bladenboro is a small community surrounded by pine forests and swamps at the southeastern edge of the North Carolina piedmont. It was also the setting for the greatest monster flap North carolina has ever seen.

The story begins in Bladen County in the nearby town of Clarkton. On Decmber 29, 1953 a local woman reported hearing her neighbors dogs barking and whimpering. When she went out to investigate, she saw a large, cat-like creature skulk off into the darkness.

On New Year's Eve, Bladenboro Police Chief Roy Fores was called out to the farm of Woody Storm. Two of his dogs had been killed by something. More reports started coming in. D.G. Pait said he watched from his service station as a dog was attacked and dragged into the woods. All across Bladen County, reports of dogs being attacked began coming in. People said they saw an animal "like a bear or a panther" that was "three feet long, twenty inches high, with a long tail and a cat's face." Others reported hearing the creature's scream coming from the swamps near the town, saying it sounded "like a woman with a knife stuck in her back."

On January 1, the bodies of two dogs were discovered. The bodies had been completely drained of blood.

A team of professional hunters was brought in from Wilmington to track down the animal. Chief Fores accompanied the tracking party and said he saw footprints "the size of a silver dollar."

Then on January 5, the Beast of Bladenboro attacked a human.

Mrs. C.E. Kinslaw heard the sound of whimpering dogs outside of her house. She went outside to investigate. She saw a large, cat-like creature rush towards her. Mrs. Kinslaw screamed and her husband rushed outside. The beast was frightened off and fled back into the woods.

Newspapers picked up the story, and soon Bladenboro was overwhelmed with reports are hunters eager to bag the beast. Over 600 hunters from as far away as Tennessee descended on the town. A fully armed pack of fraternity brothers from UNC Chapel Hill made its way down to the town.

Speculation began running rampant as to just what was being hunted. Some speculated that it was a Carolina Panther, a species thought to be extinct. Others said they were dealing with a coyote or stray dog. Most of those who had descended on Bladen County thought the best way to find out was by killing it.

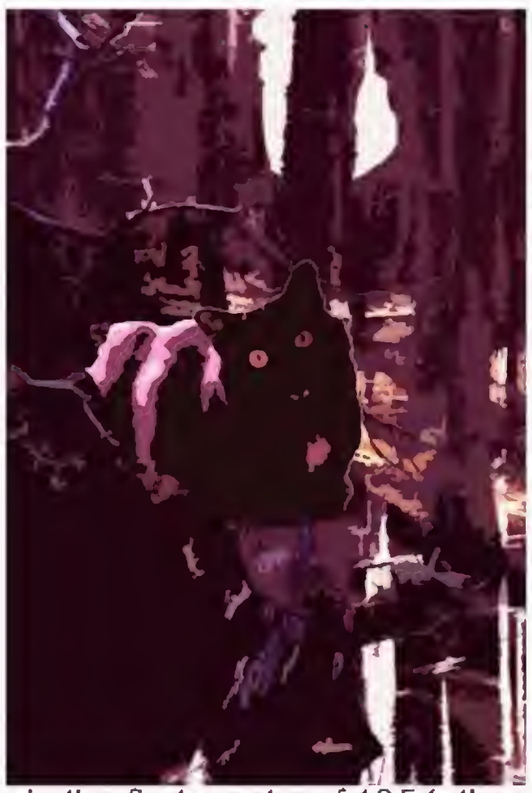
The town was terrified. Ev Butler, who was a young man in Bladeboro at the time, recalled "Night time was the feared time around these parts. As the sun set, the entire community on

the west side of town went indoors and didn't come out unless necessary."

The fear of the beast had a very real effect on Mr. Butler and his family, "We didn't live in the town limits at that time and almost everyone had an outdoor privy... To supplement the outside convenience, most houses had a 'thunder jug', a big jug that could be used at night and emptied into the privy during the day. That jug got plenty of use during the scare."

Deciding that things were getting too dangerous, Bladenboro Mayor Fussell and Chief Fores called an end to the hunt. On January 13th, taking an unusually large bobcat that had been trapped by a local farmer, the two men hung it up a flagpole in the center of town. They posted a sign underneath stating "This is the Beast of Bladenboro."

After a week or so, things settled back to normal. The hunters left town, and the reports of killings stopped coming in. Whatever the Beast of Bladenboro was, it had vanished back into the night and the swamps from where it had first emerged.



In the first weeks of 1954, the swall town of Bladenboro was terrified by sightings of a large, cat-like creature that killed dogs and drained their blood The front-page report in The Raleigh Times of the attack on Mrs. Kinslaw

'Vampire' Charges Woman

BLADENBORO, Jan. 5—A large marauding cat that has killed and sucked the blood of at least seven dogs charged a woman here tonight, but turned and fled back into a swamp when she screamed and her husband rushed onto the scene.

Police Chief Roy Forbes said the animal charged into the yard of Mrs. C. E. Kinlaw when she went out onto her front porch to investigate whimpering dogs in the street.

After the incident occurred, the armed posse that went out tonight to track down and kill the "vampire" swelled to some 500 people and scores of dogs.

Mrs. Kinlaw, who lives in the mill village near Bladenboro Mills on Highway 211 one mile west of here, said she heard the dogs whimpering early tonight and went to investigate.

Near the dogs, she said, was what looked like "a big mountain lion." It raced from three doors down the dirt street in front of her house to a few feet from her porch, then turned back when she screamed and her husband rushed out of the house, she said. A neighbor also came to her aid.

Chief Fores said tracks in the dirt road in front of the Kinlaw home were "bigger than a silver dollar."

A search party from Wilmington which tracked the animal last night as it moved in a three-mile circle along the edges of swampy areas found tracks which revealed claws

See "VAMPIRE," Page Six.

The front-page report in The Raleigh Times of the attack on Mrs. Kinslaw

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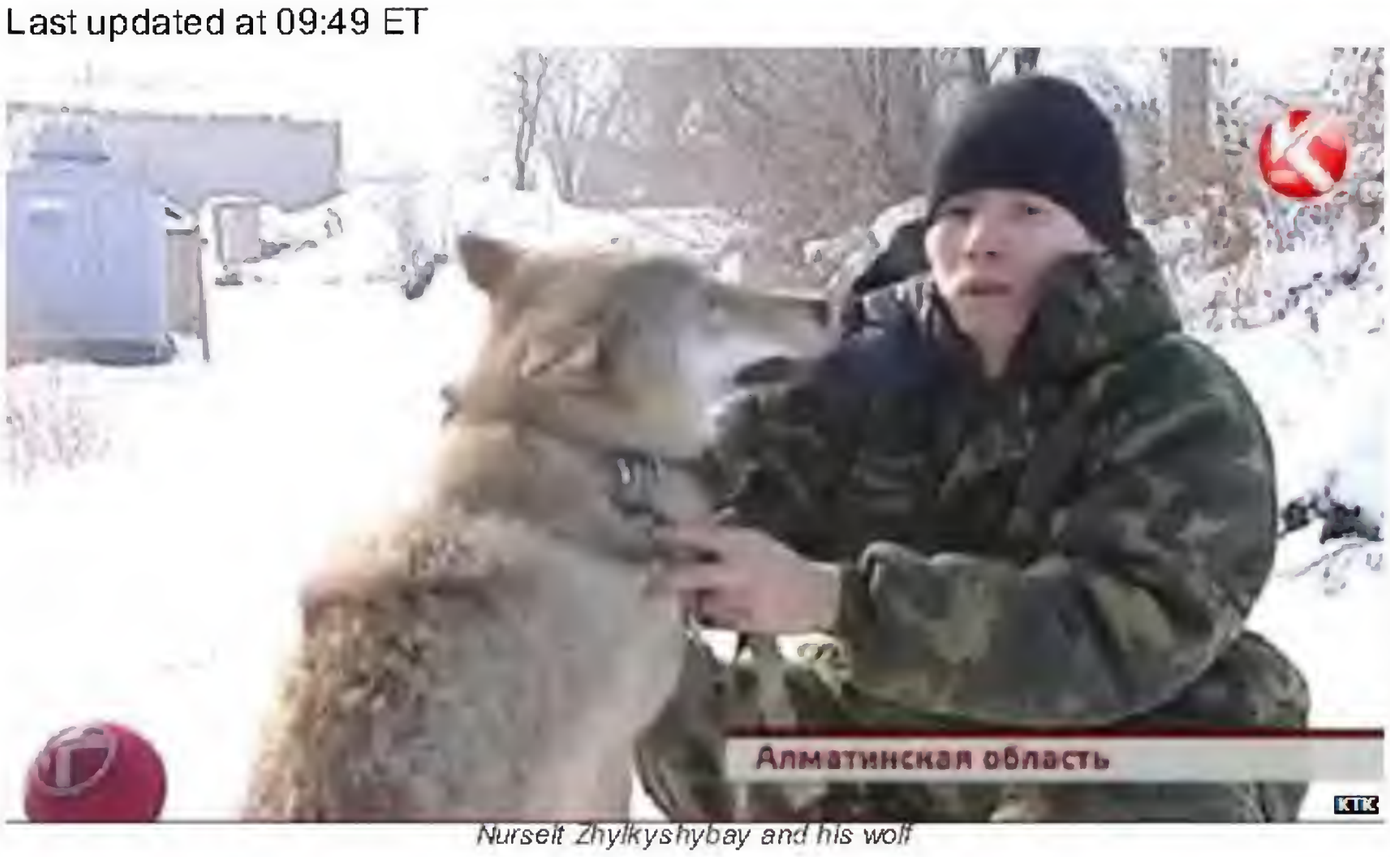
Kazakh villages in guard wolf craze

17 December 2014

bbc.com

Last updated at 09:49 ET



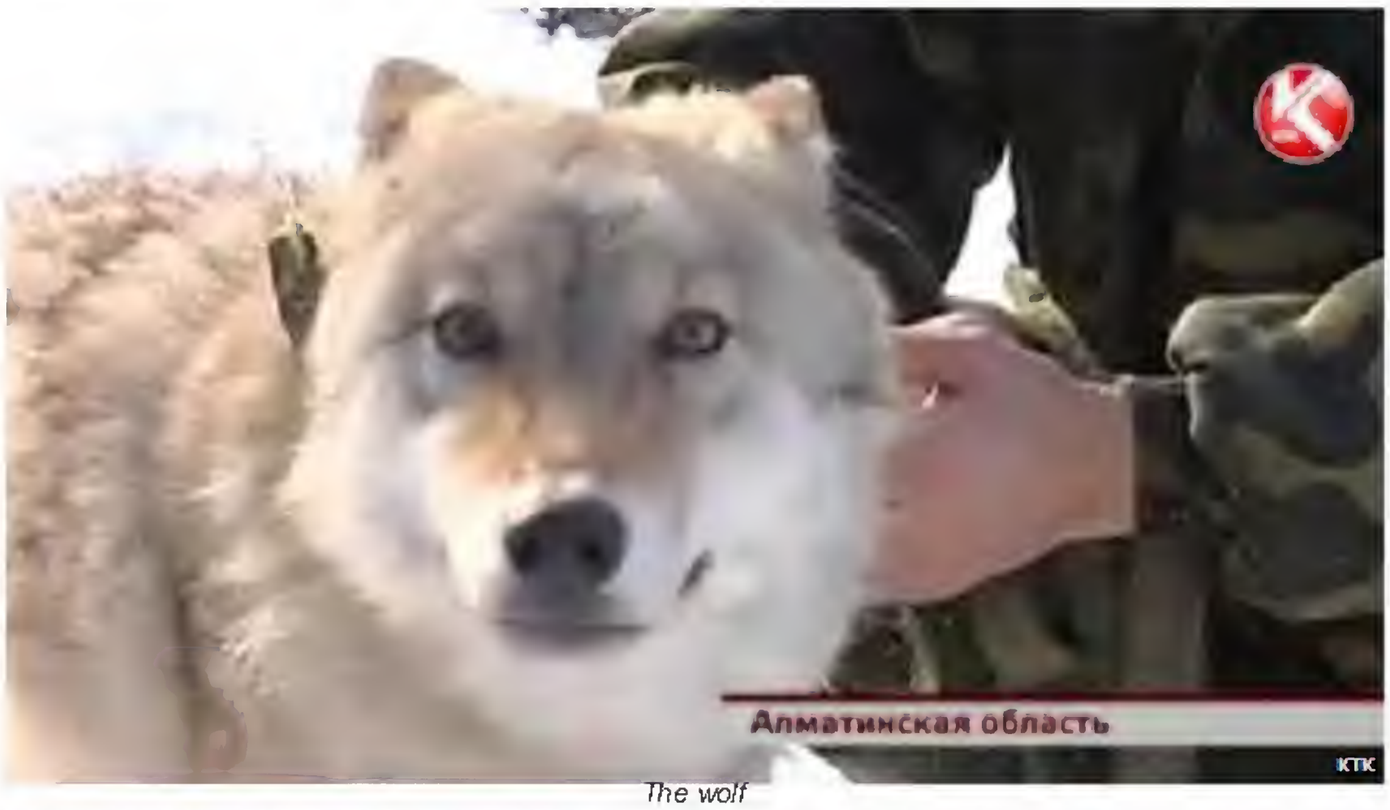
Nurseit Zhylkyshybay and his wolf

Mr Zhylkyshybay says he takes his wolf, Kurtka, for walks through the village

Villagers in Kazakhstan are increasingly turning to an unusual animal to guard their land - wolves, it's been reported.

"You can buy a wolf cub for just $500 (£320), they say, and hunters are adamant that if treated well the wild animal can be tamed," the KTK television channel reports. Nurseit Zhylkyshybay, from the south-eastern Almaty region, tells the channel he bought a wolf cub, Kurtka, from hunters three years ago, and the animal is perfectly happy wandering the yard of his house. "He's never muzzled, I rarely put him on a chain and do take him for regular walks around the village. Our family and neighbours aren't scared of him at all," Mr Zhylkyshybay insists. "If the wolf is well fed and cared for, he won't attack you, although he does eat a lot more than a dog."

But wolf expert Almas Zhaparov says the animals are "far too dangerous" to keep at home. "A wolf is like a ticking bomb, it can go off at any moment," he tells KTK. "If nothing is done, the fashion could spread to wealthy Kazakhs," who might try to keep wolves in the grounds of their houses, with possibly deadly consequences, he warns. Social media users are overwhelmingly apprehensive about the trend, although a few accuse the government of failing to cull wolves in the first place. "You can't blame villagers for using wolves to fend off wolves," says one person on the Nur news portal. Another user engages in a little black humour: "The sheep are in the pen, and the wolves have full bellies - but no one can find the shepherd."



The wolf

Wolves might be playful, but one expert warns keeping them at home is potentially disastrous

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Villagers worship schoolboy 'possessed' by snake

Kathmandu, Oct 11 (IANS)

Less than a month after a school in western Nepal reported mass fainting fits and hysteria among its students due to the "curse" of a "slain snake god", two children in another district in the region are drawing large crowds who are worshipping them as serpent gods.

The hullabaloo was started in Makrahar village in Rupandehi district by a minor boy, Amandeep Sunchauri, who began telling people a white snake had entered his body and possessed him. About a fortnight ago, the boy, whose age is about 12, began crawling on the ground and telling his family he wanted a separate place to stay in.

Under the belief the boy had become a snake god with supernatural powers, the villagers built a temple for him. Dressed in a white pair of trousers and white shirt that are covered with dust due to his crawling to and from the temple, the boy also sports a little ornament on his head - a white snake coiled to strike.

The incident became even more sensational since Sunday when a 10-year-old girl, Sarita Chaudhari, began imitating the movements of a snake and claiming she too had become a snake god.

Before gaping men, women and children, she puts her hands above her head, aping the hood of a snake, and makes sinuous movements. She is also said to have started crawling on the ground.

The duo is encouraged by a village woman, said to be the patron of Sunchauri. Chunmaya Chhetri, the woman, is a kind of foster mother of Sunchauri, who claims she is possessed by the spirit of the Hindu goddess of power, Kali.

Apparently, Chunmaya encourages the children to behave in the bizarre manner while she goes into a trance before crowds and adds to the spectacle.

Both the children were students of a local school but have apparently stopped attending class after their "transformation".

The fresh report about a new pair of bizarre kids comes after a school in Kaski district in western Nepal hit the headlines for mass hysteria. After a snake was killed on its premises, dozens of students, saying they feared the dead snake would attack them in retaliation, began fainting in class and behaving hysterically.

Nepal, one of the poorest countries in the world, also has a low literacy rate and a high degree of superstition. In the rural areas, where both schools and healthcare are inaccessible, villagers still believe in witch doctors and attribute illnesses to curses or voodoo by their enemies.

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Virginia Dare, The White Doe

While the exact fate of the Lost Colony is unknown, most historians agree that the chances of Virginia Dare having been transformed into a deer are vanishingly small. But the legend of Virginia Dare does represent a unique combination of a literary tradition that was imported to the New World from England, along with some uniquely American advertising showmanship.

The legend 0f Virginia Dare becoming a deer seems to have been first told in the late 19th Century. The earliest versions of the story, such as the one recorded in an 1880 travel article in the New York Times leave out the grapes and even the Indians entirely. In these versions, Virginia Dare in deer form has a remarkably long lifespan, and is eventually brought down by a silver bullet shot form a Virginia hunter's rifle.

But these first versions of the story are already drawing from an established literary tradition. The White deer is a common motif in English literary legends and is often used as a symbol of Christian virtue. A similar story of a young girl transformed into a white deer can be found in Yorkshire, where it formed the basis for Wordsworth's poem *The White Deer of Rylstone.*

The most famous version of the Virginia Dare story is certainly aware of this tradition. This is the version of the story whose summary you've just read, and which comes from Sallie Southall Cotten's 1901 book-length poem The White Doe, or the Fate of Virginia Dare.

Sallie Southall Cotten was a remarkable woman, a strong promoter of women's rights and a leader in the women's club movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. An organizer of the North Carolina exhibition at the 1893 Chicago World's Fair, it was she who commissioned the beautifully carved Virginia Dare desk that illustrates scenes from the legend and is now on display at the Lost Colony Museum in Roanoke Festival Park.

Ms. Cotten was also an early advocate of North Carolina's wine industry, and the addition of the scuppernong grapes colored by Virginia Dare's blood seems to be her unique contribution to the legend. This addition to the legend may also have something to do with the fact that copies of *The White Doe* were given away as promotions by Garrett & Company, manufacturers of Virginia Dare wines.

Garret's line of scuppernong wines were among the most popular blends of wine in America in the early part of the 20th Century. Before prohibition, North Carolina was one of the leading states in wine manufacture in the country, an industry that is now only slowly creeping back to being an important one in the state. Distributing Cotten's book was only part of an innovative and aggressive marketing campaign by Garret & Co. Virginia Dare wines were the first wines advertised on radio, with the once-famous tag line "Say it again — Virgina Dare."

Virginia Dare wines were also the first American made wines commercially available at the end of prohibition, but the company never regained its former glory. However, bottles of

Virginia Dare wine from the late 1940s are a much sought-after item by collectors, due to unverified rumors that the model posing for the portrait of Virginia Dare on the label was a young Marilyn Monroe.

The literary value of Cotten's poem is not of itself remarkable, but it does hold up well when considered against other book-length poetical advertisements of cheap wine.

Perhaps because her fate is known only to the imagination, Virginia Dare herself is something of a cultural signifier. For most of the early years of the republic, the story of the Lost Colony was overshadowed by stories of Plymouth Plantation, but the story of a white child growing up in primordial splendor among friendly Indians seemed to suit the Romantic sensibility of the later 19th century. So the icon of the blonde-haired Virginia Dare and her tragically beautiful death was born.

Lately, Virginia Dare has been taken up again as a symbol, this time unfortunately by an appallingly racist anti-immigration group, on whom the irony of using the first immigrant child to be born on American soil as a symbol of a closed-border policy seems to be lost.

The legend of Virginia Dare was made famous by Sallie Southall Cotten's 1901 book Virginia Dare Wines, manufactured by Garret & Company, were among the most popular wines in the nation in the early part of the 20th century, and made North Carolina a leader in the American wine industry until prohibition

Virginia Dare Wines, manufactured by Garret & Company, were among the most popular wines in the nation in the early part of the 20th century, and made North Carolina a leader in the American wine industry until prohibition

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On August 27, 1587 Governor John White sailed form Roanoke Island to return to England for supplies. He left behind the first settlement in the new English colony of Virginia, consisting of eighty-nine men, seventeen women, and eleven children. One of those children was his own granddaughter, the first English child to be born in the New World — Virginia Dare. None of these colonists were ever seen again by English eyes.

White had intended to return to the Roanoke colony the next year, but the threat of Spanish invasion with the great Armada of 1588 and the constantly-shifting politics of the Elizabethan court delayed White's return until 1590. When he arrived, he found the colony abandoned, the only clue to the fate of the colonists being the word CROATOAN carved into a tree. This was the name of a nearby island, the home of the english-speaking Croatan Indian Manteo. Manteo and another Croatan, Wanchese, had journeyed to England in 1584, returning with the reconnoissance expedition for the colony. White was unable to make a thorough search of the islands, due to the threat of a large storm and the growing impatience of a captain eager to turn south and hunt for Spanish treasure ships. By the time of the next attempt at Colonization in 1608 at Jamestown, the fate of the Lost Colonists had already become the stuff of legend.

One of these legends that has been told time and again on the North Carolina Outer Banks follows the sad, strange fate of that first English child born on New World soil.

According to the legend, Wanchese was fearful of the threat posed by the Englishmen and plotted with a nearby tribe to lead a sneak attack against the colonists. Fleeing for their lives, the colonists were gathered together by Manteo to escape and join his tribe. It was Elanor Dare, the mother of Virginia, who had the foresight to carve their destination in a tree, with her husband dead of an indian arrow at her feet and her precious child clutched into her arms.

But a good number of the colonists did escape, and they lived peacefully with the Croatan Indians. Young Virginia Dare grew to be a beautiful maiden, whose natural grace and virtue made her and example to all who knew her, colonists and Indians alike. As she became a young woman, she naturally attracted the attentions of suitors. Among these young men were the noble Okisko, and a jealous sorcerer named Chico.

Chico was the first to offer his hand to the young Virginia Dare, but the maiden refused his advanced. Enraged, he used his dark arts to curse the girl, and transformed her body into that of a snow-white deer.

The mysterious white doe was often seen on Roanoke, sadly walking through the now-overgrown and decaying houses built by her people. The story of this beautiful, elusive creature soon spread to all the tribes on the islands.

Now, Okisko, Virginia Dare's other suitor, figured that this white doe had shown up about the

same time Virginia Dare had gone missing. Reckoning that his rival in love was a pretty hand at the dark arts, it didn't take him long to figure out that this white doe was his own beloved. Seeking the help of a friendly sorcerer, he learned how to make a magic arrowhead from the mother-of-pearl lining of an oyster shell that would undo the curse.

But Wanchese had also heard of the white doe, and in a bid to prove his worth as a warrior he vowed to kill the rare creature. To this end, he pledged to use a silver arrowhead given to him by Queen Elizabeth when he had been in England.

Okisko and Wanchese, unknown to one another, both tracked the white doe for weeks — one pledged to return her to her true form, the other sworn to bring her death. And as it happened, they came upon the deer at the same hour of the same day, as she was drinking from a still, deep pool in the forest. Okisko saw his beloved, Wanchese saw his prey, and at the same time they both released their arrows. At the same time, both their arrows hit the heart of the white deer, Okisko's undoing the enchantment and Wanchese's bringing death.

Seeing what he had done, Wanchese fled the island in fear, but Okisko sadly carried the body of his beloved to the old fort built by the colonists and buried her at its center.

But soon by that pool where Virginia Dare died, a new vine sprung up, whose grapes were sweeter than any tasted before but whose juice was a red as blood. This was the scuppernong, the grape from which the first North Carolina wines were made.

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Wall Collapses at Morton Salt Warehouse

Tuesday, Dec 30, 2014 • Updated at 5:08 PM CST

nbcchicago.com

Dunes of salt spilled from a Morton Salt warehouse in Chicago after a wall collapsed Tuesday, burying cars at the McGrath Acura dealership next door under the white crystals.

No injuries were reported in the collapse at the salt company's North Side factory in the 1300 block of North Elston Avenue, fire officials said.

The wall may have collapsed because the salt inside was piled too high, a preliminary inspection by the Department of Buildings found.

"We are working with local authorities to review and respond to the situation," Morton Salt said in a statement.

Representatives from Morton Salt were at the scene and working with a structural engineer to ensure the remaining structure is safe and supported, according to authorities.

The last inspection at the facility was completed on March 5 and a refrigeration inspection was done on Nov. 2, 2012, officials said. The building also has an outstanding violation for failure to maintain its roof in "sound condition" and make repairs to the western portion of the roof, the department said.

Noble Jones, the general manager at McGrath Acura, says about 11 cars were damaged by the collapse and buried in salt. Jones estimates between seven and eight vehicles belong to customers and four to five were to be sold by the dealership.

Jones said a majority of the vehicles are "a total loss" because there was so much salt the suspension might be damaged.

This year marked the 100th birthday of the Morton Salt girl, according to their website.

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This is Google's cache of http://www.mythicalcreatureslist.com/mythical-creature/Wapaloosie. It is a snapshot of the page as it appeared on Nov 29, 2014 23:02:46 GMT. The current page could have changed in the meantime.

Wapaloosie

- #3774
- Modern Day Modern Day *(culture)*
- Sorcery and Medicinal Sorcery and Medicinal *(attribute)*
- Forest Dweller Forest Dweller *(attribute)*
- Neutral Neutral *(behaviour)*
- Fearsome Critters Fearsome Critters *(common type)*

The Wapaloosie is a Fearsome Critter of the lumberjack stories of North America. It lives in the damp forest in the North of Idaho by St. Joe River to the Pacific coast. It is the size of a sausage dog and has the feet and toes of a wood pecker. Its tail is also spike which helps it to climb up trees. The Wapaloosie feeds only on fungi that grows on trees and so it has become very agile at climbing much like a squirrel.

A lumberjack story tells of how a hunter once shot a Wapaloosie and on investigating the corpse, decided to make a pair of gloves with the Wapaloosie's skin. He tanned the skin and made the gloves with great care with the fur on the outside. But when he put them on the show to his friends the most bizarre thing happened. When he picked up his axe, the gloves naturally moved by themselves to the top on the axe blade. The man dropped his axe in horror but discovered that whatever he picked up his hands would climb to the top. He then discarded the now useless gloves. The living Wapaloosie gloves were last seen climbing up the logs in the forest.

Wapaloosie has been viewed 4465 times.
© *Please mention* ***mythicalcreatureslist.com*** *when referencing this source.*

© Copyright 2011 - 2014 MythBeasts Wapaloosie Background Illustrations (Left top-bottom, right top-bottom): Medusa by Gonzalo Ordonez , Loch Ness Monster by dyb , Basilisk by JustMick , Shuck by Serphire , Ts Um A Kas - Illustration of a rock painting (from Dover publications).

BOOM HEADSHOT! Was A Caveman Killed By A Chrononaut? - Who Forted? Magazine

By Chris Savia on August 17, 2014 whofortedblog.com

Over at the Shields Gazette, Mike Hallowell tickles everyone's fortean fancy with the tale of the Broken Hill cranium.2

Nota bene: A skull is only a skull if it has its mandible, otherwise it's just a cranium. It's a *Homo rhodesiensis*, not *H. neanderthalensis* which haven't been found yet on the dark continent. Whether they're the same species, just with notionally different skull structure is another controversy altogether.

broken_hill

Anyway, the Broken Hill Cranium. On the left side of the skull, 'round the ear, is a 'perfect' circular hole. Since the wound lacks radial cracks, which would be caused by a slow missile like an arrow or spear, some fortean forensic experts speculate this could be a bullet wound. But where's the projectile?

Mainstream science, when it's not fucking loving itself, makes a case for the cause being an infection that eventually went septic, killing our ancestral cousin. The proof in their pudding is the caveman's wound having shown signs of healing. Fair enough, but I'd be more comfortable if there were photos of similar abscesses in modern human skulls with 'perfect' proportions. Just spent a good 10-20 minutes browsing skull gore photos to no avail.

trep

Among those horrors were examples of ancient brain surgery. Known as trepanation, ancients (and our contemporaries) would carve holes into skulls to relieve pressure on the brain or release evil spirits. Sometimes the hole would be drilled into the skull, other times the skull would be scraped, and scraped, and scraped 'til the brain was exposed. The earliest known examples of trepanning are from Neolithic times, and if the Broken Hills cranium is an example of ancient surgery then our ancestors were far more clever than archaeologists would dare propose.

I have several hypotheses regarding the Broken Hill 'bullet wound', which are similarly plausible. A stone near a campfire may have had an air pocket which expanded from the heat, causing the rock to explode. A little shard of stone would be easily overlooked by an investigator as insignificant, or unrelated, to their research.

This could be a case of a micrometeorite making a lucky strike on this poor troglodyte. It's highly unlikely that a single, pea-sized meteorite zipped through time and space just to ice a caveman. This particular stone may have been part of a meteor shower that peppered Rhodesia millions of moons ago. Evidence of similar events were uncovered in 2007 with mammoth tusks showing evidence of having been struck by micrometeorites.3

Stranger still is the prospect this was caused by a human weapon, the humble sling. Best known for taking down Goliath, and smashing Mister Wilson's windows,4 ancient accounts would record astounding feats unparalleled 'til modern times and technologies caught up. Conventional science clocks a sling bullet travelling about 30 meters a second. At short range, it could cause a similar hole if the projectile was dense enough.5 Since cavemen regularly faced off with fearsome megafauna, they needed to be smarter than the average cave bear to devise weapons capable of fending off, if not killing, these monsters.

1. Ryan M.

08/17/2014 at 9:38 AM

Nigga got capped. Neanderthal drive by, ya dig?

Reply

2. TheBroker

08/17/2014 at 2:01 PM

Looking through the eye socket it appears as though theres a portion of skull missing directly across from the bullet...errr small hole. If thats the case that would eliminate micrometeorite and exploding rock as they would have different angles of exit. Trepanation would be out too, unless they got carried away and rubbed a hole clear through the guys brain. lol Only thing that makes sense to me is a bullet.

3. Schill McGuffin

08/17/2014 at 5:32 PM

The circumstances under which the cranium was found aren't clear, though it sounds like it wasn't unearthed under the utmost standards of paleontological care, even by 1922 standards. A bullet, whether from a gun or a sling, might easily have fallen out and been missed.

While archaeologists/paleontologists might be accustomed to seeing radial fractures when a puncture is caused by a low velocity weapon, I'd really like to hear from a forensic pathologist on this regarding whether such marks *always* occur. I suspect it may not be the case. I'd also be curious about *very* low-velocity punctures, such as might be produced by the fang of a predator or scavenger.

Another possibility might be that the hole was drilled post-mortem by someone looking to string up the cranium, whether some ancient headhunter, or as part of some forgotten funerary ritual, or perhaps someone who discovered and made temporary use of the cranium in the millennia between its original owner's demise and its 20th century recovery.

Reply

4. not even wrong

08/18/2014 at 5:58 AM

What is to say that some jackass didn't put a bullet in the skull in more modern times? Do we know the circumstances on how it was discovered? People have a tendency to use anything for target practice, skull would make a great one.

Reply

5. EC

08/18/2014 at 1:27 PM

Slingshot projectile? Like Goliath….

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Watch: Heroic monkey revives electrocuted friend

upi.com

The monkey spent about 20 minutes working to wake its primate partner.

By Ben Hooper | Dec. 22, 2014 at 9:30 AM

ANPUR, India, Dec. 22 (UPI) -- A video taken at an Indian train station shows a monkey working for several minutes to revive a compatriot electrocuted by overhead wires.

The video shows an unconscious monkey on the tracks after it received a shock from the wires Saturday at the train station in Anpur and a second monkey is then seen shaking, slapping and biting the unconscious primate for about 20 minutes in an apparent attempt to resuscitate it.

The shocked monkey eventually awakes when its rescuer dunks it in a nearby water puddle and the simians are then seen leaving the scene together while onlookers applaud.

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Watch: Llama on the loose sparks six hour chase in Littleborough

manchestereveningnews.co.uk

- Dec 30, 2014 11:53
- By Lisa Gray

Calista, a female rescue llama, escaped from a field at about 6pm on Monday night after being scared by a dog

Littleborough was gripped by a llama drama last night after a pet went on the run.

Calista, a female rescue llama, escaped from a field at Ealees at about 6pm after being scared by a dog.

The terrified creature was then spotted by dozens of motorists as it ran around the streets of the town.

Owner Dan Taylor eventually managed to track her down near Hollingworth Lake at about midnight, before calming her down and walking her back home.

Mr Taylor, 48, has 19 of the creatures - native to South America - which he keeps as pets on the family farm.

He believes Calista, one of 14 females in the herd, ran away after a dog got into the field and started to chase her.

Mr Taylor, who runs a granite fitting firm, said: "She was very frightened and it will take her a long time to get over this.

"All of them were very spooked by the dog. They are very timid and friendly creatures and this kind of thing really upsets them.

"I would really urge dog owners not to let their animals out loose in the area as they are not allowed in the field."

Emma-Jayne Richardson

The llama on the run in Littleborough

Mr Taylor started to take in the camel-like animals after the last of his family's pet ponies died and has re-homed unwanted llamas from all over the country.

He added: "They make wonderful pets.

"They are very affectionate and loving. They do have a pecking order though so you have to make sure you feed the correct ones first or it causes and upset."

The sight of the creature running amok on the streets of Littleborough drew some confused stares from passers by.

Dan added: "It's not the kind of thing you see every day, people were looking at me with strange expressions when I eventually walked her home."

Emma-Jayne Richardson took this picture of the animal near the Wine Press.

She said: "My fiancée and I saw it outside our house on Ealees Road.

"Then we were heading to the beach and it was running in front of the car ahead of us. I was concerned for its wellbeing as it was in the road in the fog.

The lady in front of us pulled in at the Wine Press and put a post on discussing Littleborough. It was on the Wine Press car park at that point. We see the llamas on Ealees often so we knew where it had come from."

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Weird and Wonderful Creatures of the Bestiary - Medieval manuscripts blog

typepad.co.uk

Those of you who follow our blog regularly will surely have noticed our deep and abiding love for medieval animals and bestiaries; in the past we've done posts about dogs, cats, elephants, hedgehogs, beavers, owls, and more. But today we thought we would have a look at a few of the more fantastic creatures that are featured in medieval bestiaries, many of which are scarcely known today.

The amphivena

The name of this beast is variously given as anphivena, amphisbaena, amfivena, and many other variations. But the true spelling of its name is not the least of its mysteries; the exact nature of the amphivena's form was also a source of considerable uncertainty.

Harley_ms_3244_f062r detail

Detail of a miniature of an amphivena, from a theological miscellany including a bestiary, England, 1236 – c. 1250, Harley MS 3244, f. 62r

Detail of a bas-de-page scene of two amphivenas, from the Queen Mary Psalter, England (London?), 1310 – 1320, Royal MS 2 B VII, f. 138v

The bestiary text tells us that this animal is so called because it has two heads, one in the 'normal position' and one at the end of its tail, and that its body forms a round shape. Isidore of Seville says that the amphivena can 'move in the direction of either head with a circular motion', which seems, understandably, to have been confusing to some bestiary artists. Pliny characterises it as a violent, poisonous beast, which might account for many of the depictions of it in the act of doubly attacking itself.

Royal MS 2 B VII f. 138vg70035-21a

The manticore

The manticore is a fearsome beast indeed, and one that is also apparently vulnerable to the

whims of the various artists attempting to portray it. Bartholomaeus Angelicus describes this animal by saying that 'among all the beasts of the earth is none found more cruel, nor of more wonderly shape'.

Harley_ms_3244_f043v detail

Detail of a miniature of a leonine manticore, Harley MS 3244, f. 43v

Detail of a miniature of a manticore from a bestiary with theological texts, England, c. 1200 – c. 1210, Royal MS 12 C XIX, f. 29v

This wonderly shape is essentially a composite one; the manticore is said to have a lion's body – 'blood-red in colour' - the face of a man, a triple row of teeth, and the tail of a scorpion. It is extremely swift, can jump great distances, and, according to the bestiary, 'delights in eating human flesh.'

Royal_ms_12_c_xix_f029v detail

Royal MS 12 F XIII f. 24v E031715

Rochester Bestiary, England (Rochester?), c. 1230, Royal MS 12 F XIII, f. 24v

The bonnacon

The bonnacon is reported by the bestiary to be found simply somewhere 'in Asia', and has a deceptively normal appearance. In general, it looks like a bull, but has horns that curl backwards so that if someone were to fall on them, they would be uninjured.

Detail of a miniature of a bonnacon repelling pursuit, Royal MS 12 F XIII, f. 16r

Royal_ms_12_f_xiii_f016r detail

Banish any thoughts that the bonnacon is a considerate and gentle animal, however! This creature's true claim to fame is its unique defense mechanism; when threatened, we are told, a bonnacon will spray its attacker with poisonous dung. This excrement 'produces such a stench over an area of two acres that its heat singes everything it touches', and needless to say, it is extremely effective at ending a pursuit. For obvious reasons, bestiary artists were fond of depicting this sort of scene, but some, perhaps moved by delicacy, have declined to illustrate it.

Harley_ms_3244_f041r detail

Detail of miniature of a lioness, a crocote, and a bonnacon, Harley MS 3244, f. 41r

Detail of a miniature of hunters pursuing a bonnacon with a very long lance and strategic shield, from a bestiary, with extracts from Giraldus Cambrensis on Irish birds, England (Salisbury), 2nd quarter of the 13th century, Harley MS 4751, f. 11r

Harley MS 4751 f. 11r E093636a

The leucrota

Another composite animal, the leucrota, takes its place in the bestiary just before the section on reptiles.

Detail of a miniature of a leucrota, Royal MS 12 C XIX, f. 37v

Detail of a miniature of a leucrota, Royal MS 12 F XIII, f. 23r

The leucrota is somewhat confusingly described as having the rear parts of a stag, and the

Royal_ms_12_c_xix_f037v_detail

Royal_ms_12_f_xiii_f023r detail

chest and legs of a lion, but with cloven hooves. Its most distinctive characteristic is its charming wide-mouthed grin, which stretches across its head. Its teeth are single, continuous pieces of bone, and it is capable of imitating the sound of a human voice.

The basilisk

The basilisk is included among the reptiles in the bestiary. We are told that its alternate name – regulus – is particularly apt, as a basilisk is the 'king of creeping things'. A basilisk is an exceedingly dangerous animal, as its scent can annihilate almost anything, and its gaze is terrible enough to cause the death of any man foolish enough to look at it.

Harley MS 4751 f. 59r E043091

Detail of a basilisk wearing a crown, Harley MS 4751, f. 59r

Royal MS 12 C XIX f. 63r F60101-66a

Detail of a basilisk killing a man with its gaze and being attacked by a weasel, Royal MS 12 C XIX, f. 63r

It is, however, vulnerable to the weasel, which can pursue the basilisk into its hiding hole and kill it. In the bestiary text, much is made of the example of the basilisk; the writer takes the

opportunity to expound on the nature of evil embodied in this horrible creature. He assures us that no matter how frightening an animal might be, 'the creator of all has made nothing for which there is not an antidote'. So take heart, and keep your weasels close!

We'll have a look at some more of our bestiary favourites in the months to come (of course we will!), and please send along some of your finds to us on Twitter @BLMedieval.

- Sarah J Biggs

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Fantastically Wrong: What Darwin Really Screwed Up About Evolution | WIRED

wired.com

It's hard to overstate just how brilliant and huge an idea Charles Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection was and continues to be. It absolutely rocked Victorian England, to the extent that stuffy old Victorian England could be rocked past people just barely raising their voices in polite protest. But some folks, particularly highly religious types, weren't too happy with the idea that nature can run perfectly fine on its own, without the guiding hand of a higher power. Not happy *in the least bit*.

Charles Darwin in 1875

But contrary to popular belief today, scientists were kicking around the idea of evolution before Darwin—even Charles' grandpa, Erasmus, alluded to it in verse, like a true OG. Charles' contribution was specifically the natural selection bit, that organisms vary, and these variations can better suit individuals to their environment, thus boosting their chances of passing down these traits to future generations. (Weirdly, Darwin's friend, the brilliant naturalist Alfred Russel Wallace, had arrived at the same idea independently at around the same time. The two presented their preliminary findings to the Linnean Society of London, before Darwin blew the lid off the whole thing with *On the Origin of Species*.)

There was a bit of a problem with all of this natural selection stuff, though: Darwin didn't know how it, uh, worked. Offspring had a mix of their parents' features, sure. But how? What was going on at the moment of conception? It was a huge hole in Darwin's theory of evolution. So in 1868, almost a decade after he published *On the Origin of Species*, Darwin tried to plug that hole with the theory of "pangenesis," a wildly wrong idea that goes a little something like this:

Every cell in our bodies sheds tiny particles called gemmules, "which are dispersed throughout the whole system," Darwin wrote, and "these, when supplied with proper nutriment, multiply by self-division, and are ultimately developed into units like those from which they were originally derived." Gemmules are, in essence, seeds of cells. "They are collected from all parts of the system to constitute the sexual elements, and their development in the next generation forms a new being."

Because both parents contribute these cell seeds, offspring end up blending the features of mom and dad. But what about a child exhibiting more features of one parent than the other?

Erasmus Darwin was distinguished in many fields, as a physician, chemist, zoologist, mechanic, political theorist, poet and botanist.

This comes about when "the gemmules in the fertilized germ are superabundant in number," where the gemmules "derived from one parent may have some advantage in number, affinity, or vigor over those derived from the other parent." In other words, they kinda just put more effort into it.

Gemmules must develop in the proper order to build a healthy organism. When something glitches along the way, though, you get birth defects. "According to the doctrine of pangenesis," Darwin wrote, "the gemmules of the transposed organs become developed in the wrong place, from uniting with wrong cells or aggregates of cells during their nascent state."

But most important of all, Darwin's theory of pangenesis could finally explain variations among organisms—the raw fuel of evolution. This has two causes. First, "fluctuating variability" comes from "the deficiency, superabundance, and transposition of gemmules, and the redevelopment of those which have long been dormant." In other words, they're expressed in a grandchild after skipping a generation, though the gemmules themselves haven't "undergone any modification."

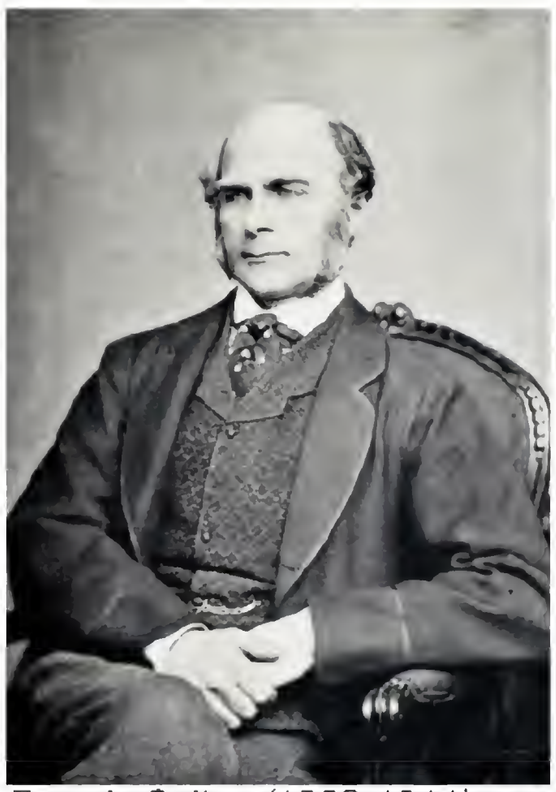
Darwin's theory of pangenesis could finally explain variations among organisms—the raw fuel of evolution.

The second touches on a now discredited theory of Lamarckism, which argued that traits an organism acquires during its lifetime, perhaps because of environmental factors, can then be inherited by its young. Darwin believed gemmules could be altered during an organism's lifetime, and these newly altered gemmules could multiply and supplant the old ones. (Lamarckism is dead, but some modern scientists argue that because behaviors like your language are acquired, this represents nongenetic inheritance that can change the course of an organism's evolution. But it's still quite a controversial subject that we needn't get into here. Those interested should read this good primer on the topic.)

So to sum up: Gemmules are seeds of cells that you get when your parents conceive you. They must form in the proper order to build a healthy organism, and the way they mix results in variations. Some gemmules can lie dormant, resulting in traits that skip generations, or change over an organism's lifetime, resulting in offspring inheriting traits that their parents had developed due to environmental factors.

Any theory needs a solid experiment, and that fell to Darwin's cousin, Francis Galton. To prove gemmules induce variation, he took the blood of one rabbit and injected it into another, with the idea that the offspring of the latter would show traits of the former. In his essay "Darwin and Heredity: The Evolution of His Hypothesis of Pangenesis," Gerald Geison writes: "These experiments, like all that followed, failed utterly to confirm Darwin's view; and when, in addition, the idea of the inheritance of acquired characters became discredited, Pangenesis was rapidly swept out of court by more satisfying explanations."

"As a result," Geison adds, "Pangenesis has often been looked upon as one of those mysterious and inexplicable failures of genius. Perhaps because they wish to present only

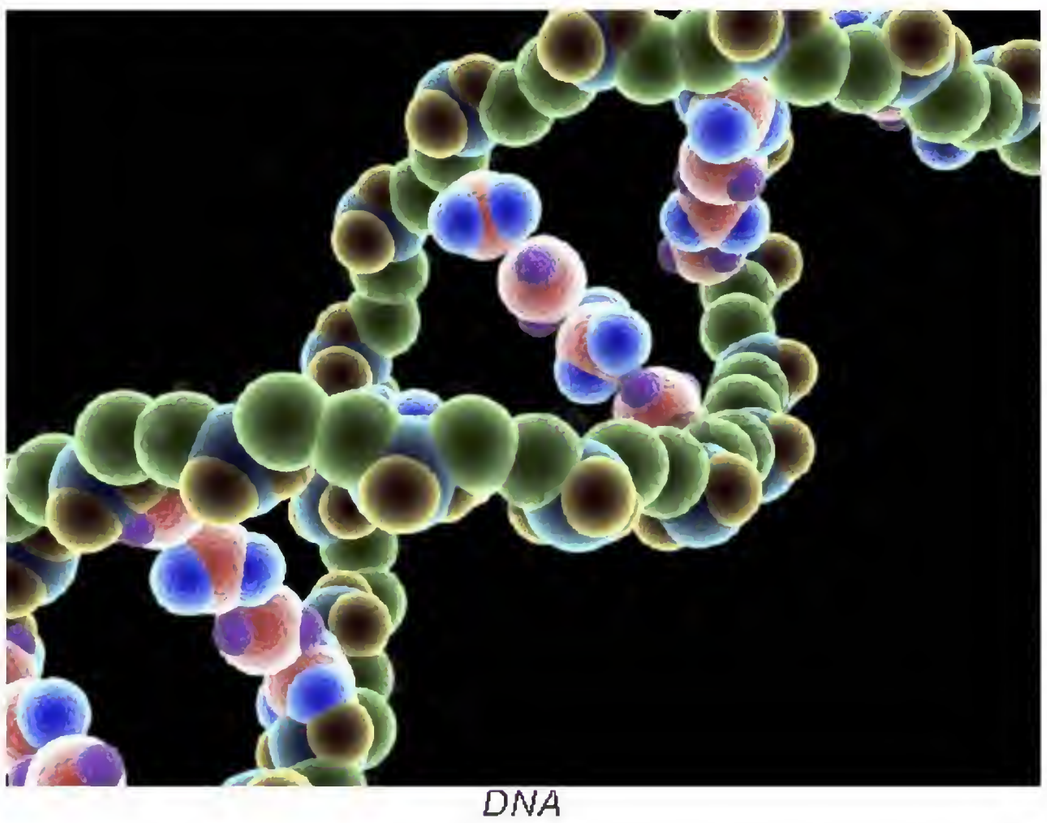


Francis Galton (1822-1911) was an English scientist and cousin of Charles Darwin. His work covered the areas of meterology, colour blindness, fingerprint identification and mental imagery. He was the founder of eugenics, the science of using controlled breeding to increase the occurence of desirable heritable characersitics in a population.

Darwin's genius, several of his biographers fail to mention Pangenesis at all."

I've said it before in this column and I'll say it again: Being wildly wrong is perfectly healthy in science, because when someone comes along to prove that you're wrong, that's progress. Somewhat embarrassing progress for the person being corrected, sure, but progress nonetheless.

The real logic behind genetics was first discovered, oddly enough, by a monk and his pea plants in the 1850s, just as Darwin was preparing *On the Origin of Species*. By breeding these plants and recording how traits get passed down from generation to generation, Gregor Mendel noticed that offspring weren't simply a blend of their two parents, as biologists had reckoned at that time. The offspring of a plant with smooth peas and another with wrinkled peas, for instance, wouldn't itself have kinda-wrinkled peas, but either full-blown smooth or wrinkled peas. This is what we now refer to as dominant and recessive alleles, or versions of a particular gene: If you have blue eyes, for instance, you're expressing a recessive allele, and if you have brown eyes, it's the dominant trait. This happens because you get two copies of each gene, one from your mother and another from your father.



DNA

"Hey dudes, I found this cool thing here," Mendel may have said, to the deafening sound of crickets. No one gave a hoot about his work. It wasn't until 1900 that his research was rediscovered by botanists, kicking off the age of genetics. Soon scientists had figured out that it was DNA that held the information that gives you your many traits, and in 1953 Watson, Crick, and colleagues finally gave it a shape: the famous double helix.

We now know that inheriting traits has nothing to do with gemmules mixing together. We of course get our DNA, which contains genes, from both our mother and father. But these are combined in unique ways at each conception, leading to variations even among siblings. Variation can also come from mutations: When our cells divide they frequently make copies of their DNA that don't always come out perfect (you probably have a whole lot of mutations that you don't even notice). So these mutations, combined with genetic shuffling at birth, drive variations and therefore evolution: Some individuals are born with traits that may suit them better to their environment, which boosts their chances of surviving and breeding and passing those genes to future generations.

Darwin took a swing at the problem of inheritance and missed, sure, but let's keep in mind that he was also responsible for what is arguably the greatest theory ever: evolution by natural selection. He just didn't live long enough to see the final piece, genetics, fall into place (well, the final *giant* piece, I should say—we still have much to learn about evolution).

And isn't it at least a little bit comforting to be reminded that even the greatest minds in history can muck things up? It sure is for me, considering that up until recently I didn't know that avocados were fruits. I mean, who saw that coming?

> Browse the full Fantastically Wrong archive here. Have a crazy theory or myth you want me to cover? Email matthew_simon@wired.com or ping me on Twitter at @mrMattSimon.

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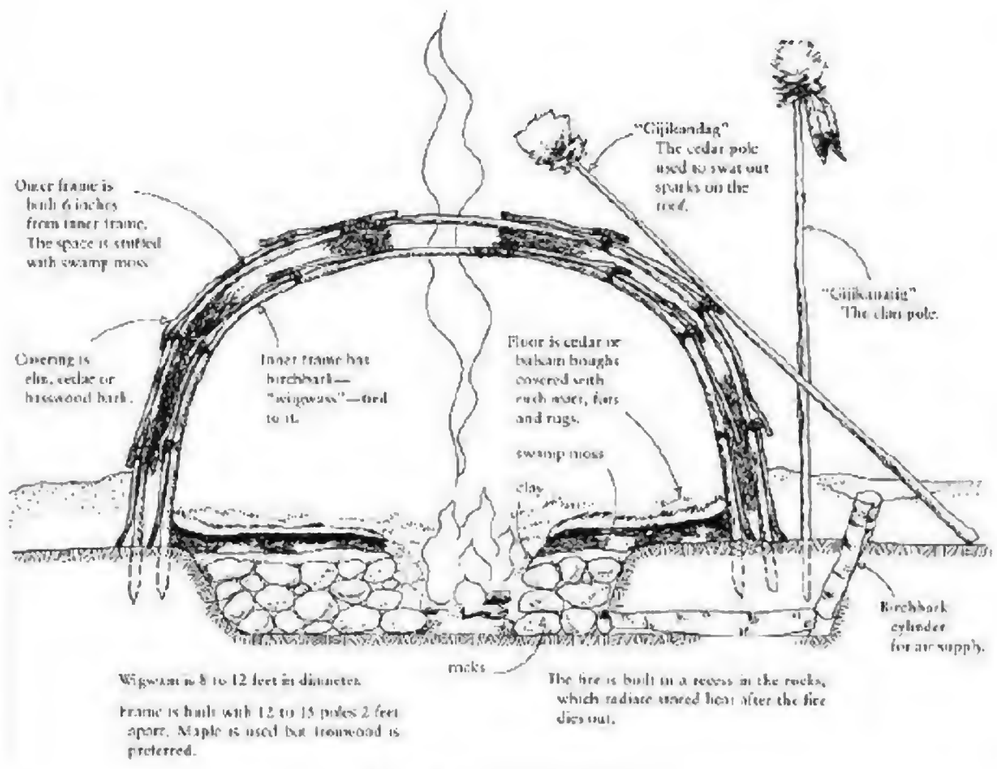
What is a smart home anyway?

Lloyd Alter (@lloydalter) Design / Green Architecture December 11, 2014

What is a smart home anyway?



Wigwam in section

At a recent panel discussion on smart homes held at Toronto's Workshop, three of the four panelists had been on TreeHugger before: Janna Levitt, Paul Dowsett and Ted Kesik. Both Ted and Paul showed this image of what they considered to be a really smart house: a wigwam, as built by the Algonquin and Chippewa. And it is ~~surprisingly~~* really sophisticated:

- It has an inner structure lined with birchbark
- It has six inches of swamp moss insulation
- It has an outer frame covered in elm, cedar of basswood bark.

This is more sophisticated than about 99% of modern houses, where the insulation is between the studs which act as a thermal bridge. It is more like the staggered studs or double walls used in Passive houses.

Then there is the heating system:

- It has piles of rocks with a clay cap for passive thermal storage after the fire goes out, which acts as a radiant floor.
- It has a birch bark earth tube to provide combustion air for the fire.

This again is more sophisticated than many heating systems that don't have a provision for makeup air. It even has a fire suppression system: a long cedar pole for swatting out sparks on the roof.

The panelists were supposed to be speaking about the modern smart home, but ended up demonstrating that the native people in the cold northern parts of North America were long ago building a whole lot smarter that we do now, and without WiFi.

*commenter Philip Rutter says I should be ashamed for using the word "surprisingly." He's right.

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What Is the Farthest Someone Has Fallen Without Dying?

Posted: 11/19/2014 3:54 pm EST Updated: 11/19/2014 3:59 pm EST

Answer by Diana Crețu

Her name is Vesna Vulović.

2014-11-19-1a1.jpg

She is a (now 64 year old) Serbian woman who used to be a flight attendant.

In 1972, when she was 22 years old, she was working on a flight that was over the (now) Czech Republic when a bomb explosion in the baggage compartment caused the plane to break apart. The bomb was claimed by a Croat that was member of a nationalist group, but no official confirmation has been made.

Vesna was the only survivor. She fell freely, without a parachute, from a height over 10,000 meters (33,000 feet). The impact got her many severe injuries (fractured skull and vertebrae, as well as broken legs). She also became partially paralyzed, and went into a coma for almost a month. She fully recovered from these injuries though, and switched to a desk job with the same airline.

Unlike many others who have been through such experiences, she hasn't developed a fear of flying, and has no issues watching movies with plane crashes.

In 1985, she was awarded the Guinness Record title for the highest fall without a parachute.

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Guests wanting to sign-up as members MUST first introduce themselves in detail at our guest book otherwise their registrations will be DELETED immediately. This is a read-only forum. Approval of members is up to the MV team, depending on your guest book introduction. Thanks!

What is the Tree of Zaqqum?

« **on:** November 27, 2010, 07:25:57 am »

The tree of Zaqqum is mentioned in 4 separate Surahs in the Noble Quran, and possible references to it have been made in other Surahs too.

The tree of Zaqqum is found in the heart of Hellfire and its bitter and throny product (a kind of awful fruit) will be eaten by the dwellers of Hellfire. This food will neither nourish nor taste good. It will only serve as a punishment for the dwellers of Hell. Its ugly fruit resembles the heads of the devils. The sinners at Hellfire who will be denied forgivness on the Day of Judgment will be hungry, yet the only food they will find will be the frightening product of the tree of Zaqqum. They will be compelled to eat it for lack of anything else or anything better. It will be so terrible that when consumed it will scald and burn the insides of those who eat it, make them feel choked and increase their suffering.

The following verses of the Noble Quran are worth reading in this regard, and remembering. They are a warning to disbelievers who refuse to reflect upon the Truth and are too distracted by the temporary worldly pleasures.

"And (it was a warning) when we told thee: Lo! thy Lord encompasseth mankind, and We appointed the sight which We showed thee as an ordeal for mankind, and (likewise) the Accursed Tree in the Qur'an. We warn them, but it increaseth them in naught save gross impiety." 17:60

"Is this better as a welcome, or the tree of Zaqqum ? Lo! We have appointed it a torment for wrong-doers. Lo! it is a tree that springeth in the heart of hell. Its crop is as it were the heads of devils And lo! they verily must eat thereof, and fill (their) bellies therewith." 37:62-66

"Lo! the tree of Zaqqum, The food of the sinner! Like molten brass, it seetheth in their bellies As the seething of boiling water." 44:43-46

"Then lo! ye, the erring, the deniers, Ye verily will eat of a tree called Zaqqum And will fill your bellies therewith;" 56:51-53

"Lo! with Us are heavy fetters and a raging fire, And food which choketh (the partaker),

and a painful doom" 73:12-13

"No food for them save bitter thorn-fruit Which doth not nourish nor release from hunger." 88:6-7

Re: What is the Tree of Zaqqum?
« **Reply #1 on:** November 27, 2010, 08:43:21 am »

Thank u for this reminder, sis. It's sure worth keepin in mind all the time. All healthy persons feel hungry every 4 to 5 hours which brings about our schedule of breakfast, lunch and dinner. At times when we miss a meal, we feel so starved that we always over-eat during our next meal. Just imagine, if those hunger pangs were satisfied with only some thorny fruits as a punishment for our own ill deeds we stubbornly practiced even though we had plenty of time to understand & improve. We would only have ourselves to blame which would indeed make our suffering a lot more regrettable for us.

Re: What is the Tree of Zaqqum?
« **Reply #2 on:** November 27, 2010, 08:44:39 am »

Btw ,, is Zaqqum tree a species of plant that grows on earth as well?

Re: What is the Tree of Zaqqum?
« **Reply #3 on:** November 27, 2010, 09:10:34 am »

Alhumdulilah. vital topic. many thanks sister Heba. Allah has said in His final Noble Message that rewards in Paradise have been paired with threats of punishment only to make the heedless heed so that they can save their souls from the worst torment. But humans are so obstinate in their heedlessness that they still refuse to wake up from their slumber of ignorance.

Very sensible analogy sister Rose. And yes, Zaqqum is a particular species of trees. I cannot recall the name of that species, InshAllah I'll look it up and let u know. It's quite common in Northern & Central Africa and parts of the Middle-East. It's appearance differs slightly from region to region. The tree is quite tall, over 30 feet, with throny branches, dark green leaves and yellow single-seeded fruits which are very bitter. This tree perhaps doesn't need too much water to survive because it's said to produce this bitter fruit even in dry season. Thus, it's sometimes used as a famine food. The famine stricken people boil this fruit before eating it, as boiling reduces its bitterness a little.

Here's how the tree looks from afar

And this is a close up pic

Re: What is the Tree of Zaqqum?
« **Reply #4 on:** November 27, 2010, 10:04:52 am »

oh! thanks sister zeynab. that's informative. this is what i wanted to know.

Re: What is the Tree of Zaqqum?
« **Reply #5 on:** November 27, 2010, 12:39:25 pm »

Thanks for this post sister Heba. Very well written and reminded. It also brings to my mind that some weeks ago, a friend of mine was saying that there's a verse (or a few verses) in the Quran that also describe that the dwellers of Hellfire will have so many injuries all over their bodies probably because of the burning, that in a state of desperation they won't even hesitate to eat the discharge from the injuries (or wounds) of their bodies. Neither he nor I could recall which verse it is. If any of you know it, can you please share. Thanks.

I'm a little short of time now, but will InshAllah be back in the evening.

Re: What is the Tree of Zaqqum?
« **Reply #6 on:** November 27, 2010, 01:25:28 pm »

Yes, I recall it brother. It's Surah Al-Haqqah (The Reality), which is the 69th Surah and verses are 35 to 37. Actually Pickthall uses a more general description, but the Corpus Quran has given it in greater detail.

Pickthall translates Verses 69:35-37 as follows:

"Therefor hath he no lover here this day,
Nor any food save filth
Which none but sinners eat."

And here's how the Corpus Quran explains it:

The following are the original Arabic of Verses 69:35-37

فَلَيْسَ لَهُ الْيَوْمَ هَاهُنَا حَمِيمٌ
وَلاَ طَعَامٌ إِلاَّ مِنْ غِسْلِينٍ
لاَ يَأْكُلُهُ إِلاَّ الْخَاطِئُونَ

Verse 69:35 - So not for him today here any devoted friend,
Verse 69:36 - And not any food except from (the) discharge* of wounds,
Verse 69:37 - Not will eat it except the sinners

*In dictionaries the word "ghis-linin" (discharge in English) has also been explained as "washings." I presume it expresses the concept "flowing," that is, discharge flowing from the injuries or wounds on the bodies of the dwellers of Hell caused by the fire and hard punishment of this horrific place.

Therefore, the above 3 verses can be interpreted as below:

In Hell the sinners will have no devoted or loving friends. Neither will they have any edible food except the discharge flowing from their own body wounds or injuries. It's only the sinners who will go through this ordeal. This is a sign of extreme desperation of the dwellers of Hell. They will be hungry, yet other than the awful bitter and thorny fruits of Zaqqum, these sinful people will have nothing else to eat. And therefore, in this miserable situation they won't even refrain using the impurities of their own skins as 'food.'

If anyone else can add anything more to this interpretation from the Quranic words, please do so. It will help us all to learn better.

And Allah knows best.

Re: What is the Tree of Zaqqum?
« **Reply #7 on:** November 27, 2010, 01:43:08 pm »

I too found that in dictionary the term "ghis-linin" has been explained as 'washings.' If I'm not mistaken, this term "ghis-linin" seems to be similar to 'ghusl' meaning bathing. During bathing when people wash themselves, dirt, sweat and impurities flow from their bodies. It's possible that the reference is similar to this in Verses 69:35-37. And that's why in Pickthall's translation it says "Nor any food save filth." It replaces "discharge of wounds" with "filth" which is a more general expression. I think this is more accurate. The concept of "discharge of wounds" seems to arise from the word "ghis-linin." Of course I'm not an expert in Arabic, but the sound and dictionary meaning of "ghis-linin" does not seem to comply with "discharge of wounds" or "pus." It may include that, but does not specify it.

I won't be surprised that while explaining the grammar of the Quran in Corpus Quran, they have tried to keep it somewhat compatible with the Hadith. This is a standard problem with majority of the Muslim authors while writing Quranic tafsirs or while explaining Quranic grammar. After all, most of them are strict Hadith adherents. Even most translators are rigid Hadith followers and their first priority is to keep their translations in line with whatever they have read in the Hadith. Abdullah Yusuf Ali is a clear example, and it's because of his wrong translations which he has made compatible with Hadith that his work is so popular within the Ummah.

Now, check the following Bukhari Hadith on people of Hellfire on 'drinking pus extractions.'

"And you will see the sinners (denizens of Hell) that Day bound together in ... be given the pus (extractions) of Hellfire's denizens to drink." (al-Bukhari)

There are articles written by various Salaf/Wahabi writers stating: *"For drinking, the denizen of Hell would be provided with hot, boiling pus mixed with blood, matter, urine and tears etc. of the dwellers of Hell."* These authors also write: *"A drunkard will be given blood, pus, sweat, filth, etc. to drink in hell."*

Only Allah knows from where they pick such a wide range of details, also for "drunks" for which we know for sure no such punishment is specified in the Quran. No doubt, alcohol consumption is completely forbidden. But the above punishment regarding drunkards is surely not stated, not even indirectly hinted upon, in the Noble Quran.

To make the Quran translations compatible with these writings of Hadith and details provided by the imams, check Yusuf Ali's translation of Verses 69:35-37 as below:

"So no friend hath he here this Day.
"Nor hath he any food except the corruption from the washing of wounds,
"Which none do eat but those in sin."

In think it's quite simple to perceive that Yusuf Ali has tried his best to keep these verses in line with the Hadith and fatwa writers' opinions, specifying the concept of body 'wound discharge' and associating it with the filthy food of the sinners. But I think that the meaning is more general. The term "filth" as translated by Pickthall seems far more correct. Abdullah Yusuf Ali has mistranslated several verses of the Quran because of his effort to keep them in conformity with the Hadith.

And of course, only Allah knows best.

Re: What is the Tree of Zaqqum?
« **Reply #8 on:** November 27, 2010, 02:07:01 pm »

Thanks sis! you have really explained something I didn't quite think of before. Definitely makes sense. It's surely very likely that the verses include what Corpus Quran has explained, but it doesn't specifiy that .. as you've stated. I'll try to do a bit more research on the term "ghislinin." But I'm really glad u gave this feedback. I feel it's helped me much.

Re: What is the Tree of Zaqqum?
« **Reply #9 on:** November 29, 2010, 03:17:52 am »

Very interesting thread. It really helped me to understand those 2 verses of Suah Haqqah on a wider sphere. I too will try to get some info on the term "ghislinin." I think sister Zaynab is right. It originates from the world 'ghusal.'

Re: What is the Tree of Zaqqum?

« **Reply #10 on:** November 29, 2010, 04:57:07 am »

JazekAllah khair sisters heba and zeynab. Actually I didn't know of the existence of that hadith. With it in consideration, I think we will need to do some more research on the word "ghis-linin." In that perspective, what sister zeynab said surely makes sense.

Many thanks again sisters, for your very enlightened write ups. Found it extremely helpful.

Re: What is the Tree of Zaqqum?
« **Reply #11 on:** December 01, 2010, 09:23:42 am »

Well yes, I found out. The term is actually "ghisleen." I thought as much. I don't know why the corpus website mentions "ghislinin." And it does originate from "ghusl" meaning 'bath.' This person whom I asked is a brother living in the middle east. Though he's not Arabic speaking but has learned a lot of Arabic. He also knows some Arabic 'scholar.' The problem is that he is a Hadither. So, the moment I mentioned that this word is mentioned in Verse 69:36, he connected it with that Hadith and said "ghisleen" means "pus." However, he also mentioned, I quote as below:

"In the broader sense 'ghusl' means cleaning and 'ghisleen' the filth cleaned by ghusl. The water and filth which flows down with 'ghusl' can be called ghisleen, any dirt or filth coming out can be called ghisleen . In the verse it means pus coming out from the burning bodies of non-believers which will be their food. It has to be read with previous verse. People of hell will have no food save the filth flowing out of their burning bodies. The literal translation could be, 'Nor any food save pus or filth of the people of hell.' "

So .. as it's easy to perceive, "ghisleen" is a general term implying dirt / filth flowing from one's body as dirt and filth flows from the body while taking a bath or shower. Since Hellfire is a burning hot place, it can surely include the discharge from wounds of the dwellers of hell, but we cannot say that it specifies only that. It obviously implies to dirt of various kinds that may flow from the bodies of those people e.g. sweat, saliva, dust etc. Thus, Pickthall's translation is the actual correct one. But because of that Bukhari Hadith, the minds of all Hadithers keeps getting distracted and they feel they must mention the word "pus" in the translation even though the original Arabic of Vese 69:36 makes no references to "pus."

Re: What is the Tree of Zaqqum?
« **Reply #12 on:** December 01, 2010, 09:46:05 am »

i see, okaay. I think if u hadn't told him that this word appears in Verse 69:36, then he would simply have explained the word "ghisleen" as "filth" during flowing from body as during bathing. And the reference in the Verse is similar except that in Hellfire the people won't be taking a bath with clean water, but probably they'll be bathing in their sweat, in filthy water, and probably with discharge of body wounds. You were absolutely right sister Zeynab. "Ghisleen" is connected to 'ghusl' and it does have a general reference in the Quranic Verse on focus. Pickthall translated it very correctly. He obviously translated it without be focused on Hadith which is what is expected of every conscientious translator.

It's really sad how Hadith followers forget that it's the Hadith which should explain itself by

being focused on the Quran, instead they turn it the other way round, explaining the Quran by being focused on the hadith.

I'm sure this would now clarify matters to brother PT. and thankx sister.

Re: What is the Tree of Zaqqum?
« **Reply #13 on:** December 06, 2010, 02:17:21 pm »

Do the Jews and christians believe in the Zaqqum tree bearing food for the dwellers of Hellfire?

Re: What is the Tree of Zaqqum?
« **Reply #14 on:** December 06, 2010, 02:27:35 pm »

Well, I'm sure it must have been there in the original Torah and Bible. But after the Jews and Christians changed their Scriptures, I don't know of any mention of Zaqqum tree in their altered books.

In the west they have some concept of what they call "el-zakum" as an evil spirit or a monster somewhere in the el-nath volcanoe mountains that probably consists of mines. It's said to be somewhere in North America. This story is of course a myth, and I'm not sure of its details. As I said, it's very likely that the original Bible and Torah contained authentic information of the Zaqqum tree being in Hellfire as mentioned in the Quran. But since the Jews & Christians changed their scriptures, so the bible writers changed the meaning of the Zaqqum tree to those stories about being a monster in the volcanic mountains and all that imaginary stuff. But I am not sure if this non-Muslim concept of "el-zakum" comes from the real Zaqqum tree of Hellfire. It's a possibility though. Only Allah knows best.

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What's the Deal With Arkansas' Radioactive Snow? - Who Forted? Magazine

By Greg Newkirk on January 31, 2013

whofortedblog.com

Daren Foraday believes the radioactive snow in White Country, Arkansas reaches levels dangerous to health

On January 15, White County, Arkansas resident Daren Foraday walked outside to play in the fresh snow. No, not with his sled.. but with his geiger counter. What he found, levels of radiation comparable to the kind exposed to workers in a radioactive plant, disturbed him.

Foraday, a self proclaimed "science nerd", wonders why the citizens exposed to the snowfall weren't warned of it's levels. According to Daren, the area around White County generally clocks in at 35cpm in background radiation, but after the snowfall that number was much higher.

"The sleet and snow was showing an alert level above 100cpm," he wrote. "The high levels only lasted about 24 hours indicating a short half life of the hot particles. This kind of exposure can reduce the immune system and may be the cause for recent spikes in flu and illness in this area and others. We can only assume because the event was short lived is why they are not warning parents to keep there children out of this unsafe wintery mix."

Dr. Jeff Gaffney, UALR chemistry professor, doesn't believe that the levels, which have risen as high as 240cpm, are anything to be concerned about about.

"We monitor this stuff all the time," he told *KARK* News. "Until you get to tens of thousands of counts I'd stop worrying about it."

Foraday isn't convinced, however, insisting that parents keep their children from playing in the snow, or worse, putting it in their mouths.

"Not creating panic or concern seems to be more important than public safety," he wrote. "Why warn parents exposure to the snow and sleet is equal to flying at 30000 feet or exposure levels for nuclear plant workers right?"

4 Comments

1. First, Geiger counters aren't like thermometers where it takes time to measure the temperature because the thermometer has to equalize with the environment. Geiger counters will instantly display the radiation measured. If you leave it in one place and the readings start to rise and plateau then something is wrong with your counter. They have temperature operating ranges and if it's too cold or too hot it will degrade their accuracy.

   Second, he's comparing the reading from the volume of air in his house to surface objects on the ground and his car. Radiation decreases with the inverse square law. Double the distance from a source and the readings will decrease 4 fold. He doesn't make any surface contact readings on objects not covered with snow, so he can't say the high readings are only from the snow.

   Third, "alert situation"? Now he's just making shit up. His Geiger counter has an alert setting that can be changed by the user and is completely arbitrary. He set the level, the level was met, and he cries the sky is falling.

2. How did Americans get to the point of thinking that feeding their children amounts of radiation

similar to those found at nuke sites is okay? In fact why is consuming/inhaling/ingesting ANY extra amounts of radioactivity okay with American parents?

Stupid parents equals dead kids.

3. First, let me say that guy Chew is dead wrong. Geiger counters do need sample time to get a reading ,the longer the better in fact. There is nothing wrong with the methods shown in the video. What the guy says is accurate. What he did not ever say, is you would get "radiation sickness" from this radiation. So, stop thinking that is what he meant. You are wrong. He spoke of a lowered immune system – not radiation sickness- totally different things. Radiation kills cells, that is how it hurts you. So the more cells that die the sicker you become. No person has the same level of tolerance as we each live our own life exposed to radiation in different forms and levels. The news gave him 5 seconds to speak. How can you even begin to understand his concerns? Radiation is in the snow and rainfall. So we know that something is contaminating it. (100 cpm is the set level of alert for radiation -It means something might be contaminating the area.) Low levels of radiation can for sure reduce health as even background radiation is not good for the body as all radiation is cumulative over your lifetime. What he did not get time to say was it is very possible that a radioactive isotope of barium is falling on us and we for sure do not want to be exposed to it. Readings of rainfall have been taken. It is certain that something is in that rainfall and it is not radon, unless the health dept is lying about the radon levels for this area. 12.5 percent above average they say and the tests of rainfall have been high- up to 500cpm 98 percent of the time. So the model for radon is not going to dismiss this event as natural. In 2009 a man captured the jet wash from the x's the planes are making and had it tested. It was barium. (barium comes in many isotopes and many are very radioactive and harmful to immune system health.) This area is heavily chem-trailed before each radioactive rainfall. So if you want to attack someone then by all means attack my post. I have the data and the equipment and will be glad to set you straight. The man was right to send caution because the rainfall in this area is showing constant issues and the secret of air force spraying of water vapor clouds (chem-trail spraying),is no secret to informed scientists. It is not the radiation itself we should be most worried about, as it is only the marker for an accurate alert event. The chemical poison that contains this radiation, is the thing that will actually end up making you sick, by lowering your immune system. Watch this Arkansas news video link youtu.be/DNFy2xFPMIo if links are permitted.

- Chew is not wrong at all. You crackpot conspiracy theorists are so incredibly arrogant with your opinions... He is dead right about the lack of scientific method in this video, there are no controls. Also there is no indication what TYPE of radiation we are talking about here. That makes a MASSIVE difference... with sentences such as 'Radiation kills cells, that is how it hurts you. So the more cells that die the sicker you become. ' you obviously have no idea what you are talking about...

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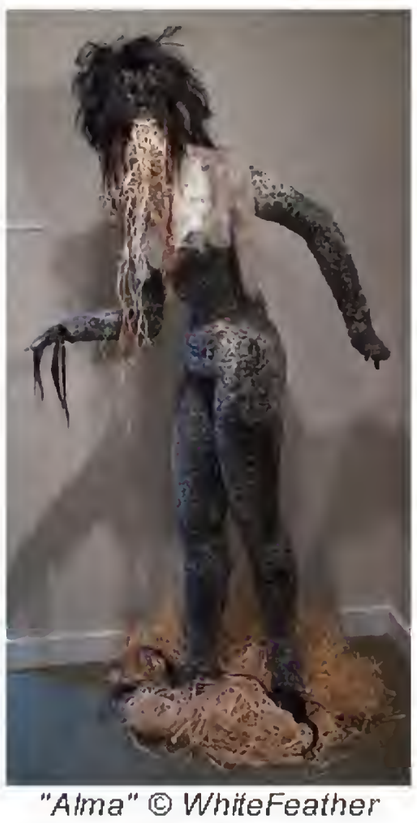
Where in the World is Alma? - Urban Legend in the Making - Who Forted? Magazine

By Maritimer on August 16, 2012

whofortedblog.com



"Alma" © WhiteFeather Hunter Photo used with permission, courtesy of WhiteFeather Hunter

In what is perhaps one the strangest art heists in history, a Canadian artist's textile sculpture resembling a Cryptozoologist's wet dream was stolen from a cliff top overlooking Knowledge Park Drive in Fredericton, New Brunswick on August 2nd 2012.

WhiteFeather Hunter created and then anonymously installed Alma (which means "soul" in Spanish) on the cliff top. Like many Cryptid sightings, WhiteFeather left Alma's discovery up to pure chance.

Shortly after its installation, photos of Alma began leaking onto the internet. In the first three days Alma went viral, garnering over 5 million hits and enticing hundreds of fans to make the pilgrimage to see the sculpture in person.

Contrary to many stories published about Alma, the only association existing between Alma and anything close to crypto is one of the inspirations for the installation; "Fauns Head", a poem by Arthur Rimbaud. A Faun is a mythological creature from Roman antiquity. Considered a forest God in Roman mythology, they are generally depicted as half goat and half man and dwell in enchanted forests.

Comprised of a number of organic parts, including but not limited to: Moose teeth, lamb skin, beaver fur, dear hoof, and human hair – the installation elicits a macabre reaction in its execution. If the visage of Alma doesn't dial your creep factor past 11 on its own, perhaps the second inspiration for the piece will:

> *"When Oskar Kokoschka returned home from World War I, his beloved, Alma Mahler, had already married another. In his duress, he commissioned a doll maker to create a life-sized replica of Mahler. It was given a fur covering to replicate the softness of her skin. Kokoschka escorted his doll to the opera, held parties in its honour, and hired a maid to dress and service it. "*

"Alma" © WhiteFeather Hunter Photo used with permission, courtesy of WhiteFeather Hunter

While we're sure Oskar Kokoschka's commissioned sex toy was probably more visually appealing (at least to him), Alma seems to portray the darkness inherent of Oskar's feelings for his lost love, and perhaps some of the darkness that exists within love itself.

We're not sure if it was for authenticities sake, or just for giggles, but that patch or fur covering Alma's nether-regions is 100% Canadian beaver.

Some have gone as far as to compare Alma to Bigfoot, while others have given her the affectionate pet-name of "Hoofhand". Whatever people think Alma resembles, it's not something we'd want to stumble onto in the woods, day or night.

One individual has even gone as far as setting up an account titled "Hoofhand" to seed the idea that those who feared the installation would be haunted by Alma in their nightmares. We'd like to think Alma

made good on that offer, and is stalking the countryside occupying the nightmares of children everywhere.

To see more of WhiteFeather Hunter's artwork visit her portfolio.

Thank you to WhiteFeather Hunter for the permission to use photos from her personal portfolio, and her kind words regarding the story.

Sources:

http://whitefeatherhunter.com/artwork/1017103_Alma.html

http://herenb.canadaeast.com/news/article/1470533

1. Kwin The Eskimo

08/16/2012 at 3:30 PM

Awesome story. I would have traveled to see it if it had not been stolen. The backstory certainly adds to the creepy-factor.

Reply

2. Bob Jase

08/16/2012 at 4:59 PM

Zana stole it.

3. Greenmoon

08/16/2012 at 7:07 PM

I've seen "Alma", and she continues to live within the darkest, and least visited areas of my mind. She's tall, and sexual in appearance, and gently horrifying to behold, but you are drawn to run your hands over the soft fur on her shoulders. Touching her left me feeling tainted somehow.

Reply

4. Assman

09/05/2012 at 10:41 AM

What, no reference to the legendary "Almas" of Central Asia? Bob Jase seems to get it.

Reply

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Fantastically Wrong: Why Is the Sky Blue? It's Packed With Sexy Energy, of Course

- By Matt Simon
- 11.26.14 |

blue-sky-inline

Fred Froese/Getty Images

I know of a simple box that can radically improve your health, a device so powerful that the FDA once banned it and condemned its inventor to prison. But luckily, and quite graciously, its design has been left unpatented, free for all who might care to harness the mysterious "orgone energy" that pervades our universe. You can even get the 175-page instruction manual as a PDF here.

First things first: Your Orgone Energy Accumulator, as it's known, must be big enough to comfortably seat a human being, and if you're able to bury it in the soil, all the better, for the dirt only enhances the effects of the orgone. Its walls must consist of alternating layers of a metallic and a non-metallic substance, say steel wool and cotton. And the inner surface of the device must be bare metal of some sort.

When you're done, simply enter the box, shut the door behind you, and take a seat. After a few minutes your skin will begin to tingle, and you'll feel a sort of warming. Your heart rate will stabilize at a Goldilocks pace—neither too high nor too low. You will feel, in a word, enlivened. But take care not to stay too long. The minute you begin to feel nauseated, make your exit, for your body has been charged to capacity with orgone.

In the strange and colorful history of pseudoscience, Wilhelm Reich's "discovery" of orgone—a substance that's not only a life force, but indeed makes up the very fabric of space—must surely be a watershed. This is a story of a man who went from psychoanalysis wunderkind to enemy of Hitler to enemy of the US government, only to die a lonely death in prison. Yet somehow, almost a century later, his bonkers ideas live on.

How to Piss Off Hitler: A Case Study

Reich was born in Austria in 1897, and rode the rising wave of the psychoanalysis discipline in the early 20th century under the wing of his mentor, none other than Sigmund Freud, according to Martin Gardner in his book *Fads and Fallacies in the Name of Science*. He was a devout Marxist, and argued that the proletariat was so politically impotent because the

workers were sexually repressed. Revolution, Reich claimed, could only happen with an uninhibited release of sexual urges. (It's helpful, therefore, to think of him as Freud meets Lenin meets Larry Flynt.)

jj

Moscow rejected his views as "rubbish," but more importantly the Nazis took exception to Reich's claims that like the proletariat, German fascists also suffered from sexual repression. He wisely fled to Scandinavia, and it was there that he discovered orgone energy, which he compared to Freud's notion of the human libido, only on a much grander scale.

Orgone is everywhere, usually manifesting as the color blue. So the sky is blue not because molecules in the atmosphere scatter blue light better than red light, but because it's positively saturated the orgone energy. Same with the oceans, and "the color of luminating, decaying wood is blue," Reich wrote, "so are the luminating tail ends of glowworms, St. Elmo's fire, and the aurora borealis." And those rippling waves of heat you see coming off a hot road? That's orgone energy as well, moving west to east faster than the Earth rotates.

When it comes to organic matter, according to Reich the building blocks of life are not cells, but "bions" that he claimed to have observed. Gardner explains: "It consists of a membrane surrounding a liquid, and pulsates continually with orgone energy. This pulsation is the dance of life—the basic convulsive rhythm of the love which finds its highest expression in the pulsation of the 'orgasm formula.'" So you and me are essentially made up of lots and lots of tiny sexiness. And these bions reproduce asexually by division, just like bacteria.

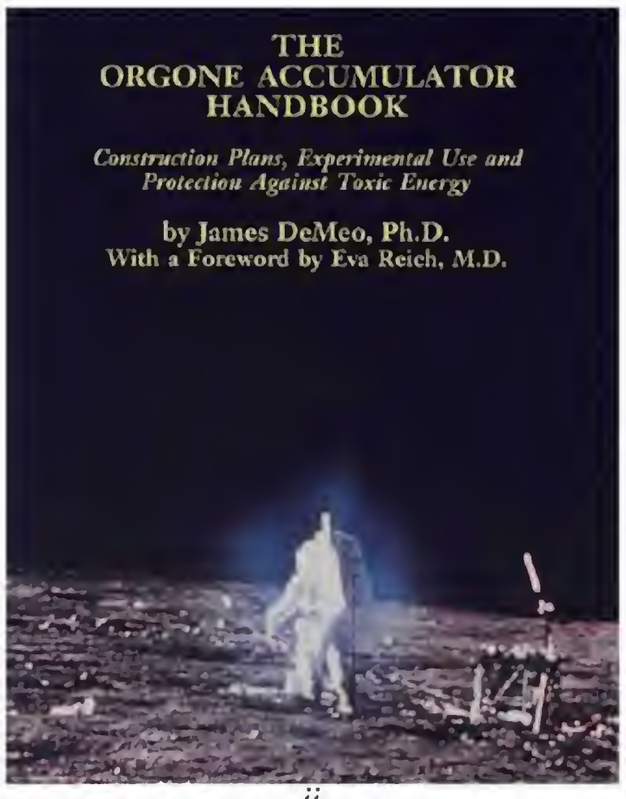
As such, a cynic may rightly argue that Reich was indeed just staring at bacteria.

How to Piss Off America: A Case Study

Reich relocated to the US in 1939 and set up shop on Long Island. A year later, he invented the aforementioned Orgone Energy Accumulator, which concentrates the energy that's going to waste all around us. It was, as one of Reich's colleagues put it, "the most important single discovery in the history of medicine, bar none," a lofty statement that's perhaps immediately invalidated by the addition of "bar none." For bedridden patients, there was even a blanket version, a sort of dome with additional layers of material placed under the mattress.

The therapeutic effects of the Orgone Energy Accumulator were nothing short of miraculous. "In severe cases of burns," a pamphlet on the device claimed, "experience has revealed the amazing fact that no blisters appear, and that the initial redness slowly disappears. The wounds heal in a matter of a few hours; severe ones need a day or two." The box's concentration of orgone can even sterilize wounds, plus treat colds, arthritis, ulcers, and, yes, even cure cancer if caught in its early stages.

"Do what now?" someone at the FDA asked in the 1950s. In his instructions for building an accumulator, James DeMeo, who founded the Orgone Biophysical Research Library in 1978,



jj

notes: "Reich's orgone energy experiments attracted the hostile criticisms of many in the medical community, and a smear campaign in the press triggered an investigation by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA)." Instead of trying to reproduce Reich's experiments, the "bureaucrats relied upon gossip and rumor." And in a "judicial ruling that is, to the best of my knowledge, unique in American history, the FDA sought and obtained a Federal Court Decree of Injunction, which ruled that the orgone energy 'does not exist.'" In so doing the court banned books containing the word "orgone," which the ACLU was predictably none too happy about.

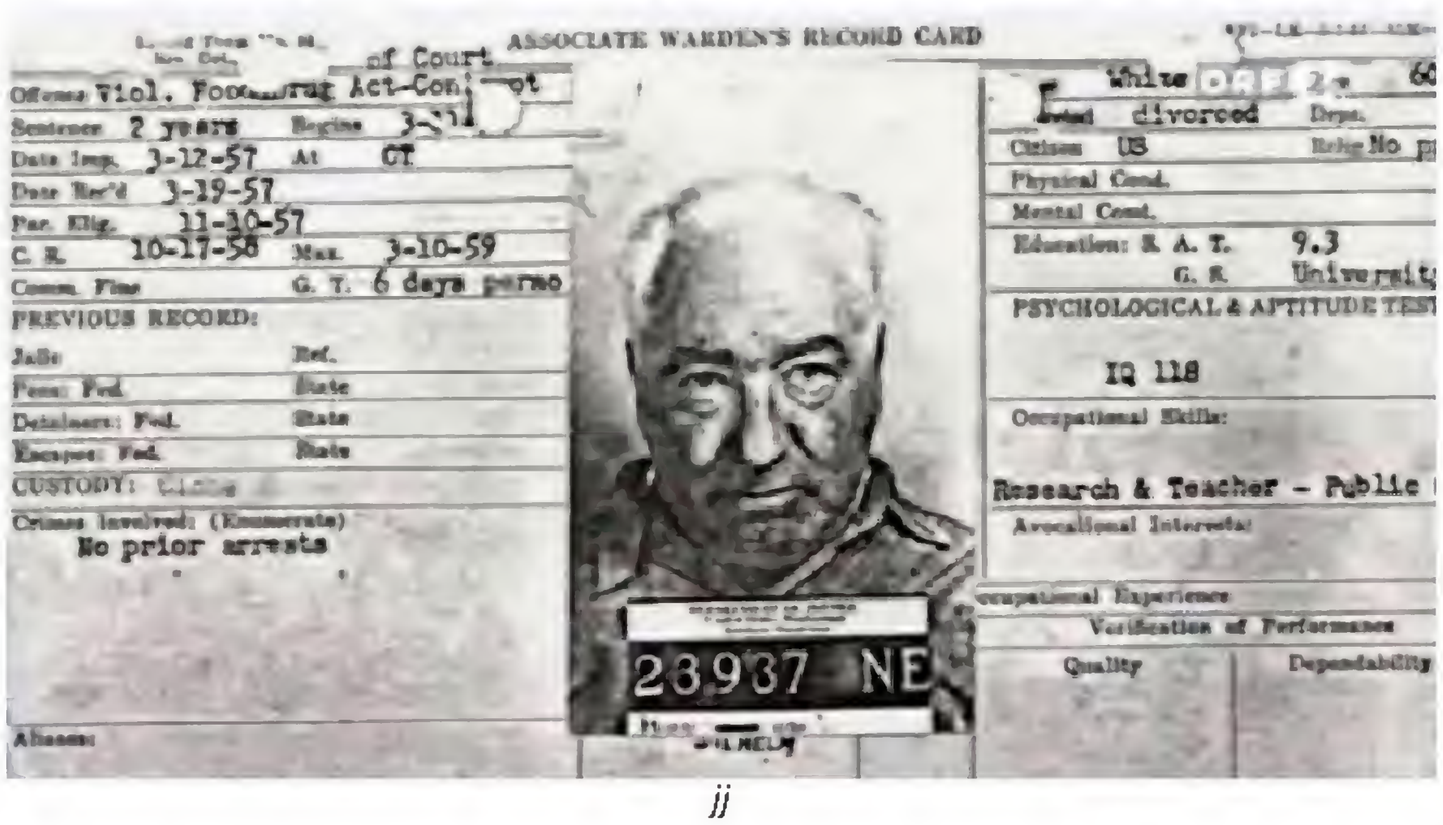
jj

Reich was also warned against selling the accumulators. The FDA ordered all orgone literature and devices destroyed, and according to DeMeo, attacked Reich's lab with axes (whether or not they released great blue clouds of energy in the process is lost to history). Reich continued profiting from the accumulators, though, and the court found him in contempt of the injunction. He was sentenced to federal prison, where he died in 1957.

Yet the theory of orgone did not die with him. DeMeo published his instructions for building a Orgone Energy Accumulator a full three decades later in 1989, and there's currently a "university"—if you're going to be liberal with the term—called the American College of Orgonomy that's somehow small enough to fit in a PO box in New Jersey.

Far from a fringe movement, orgonomy has tallied its fair share of famous adherents. William Burroughs apparently swore by the therapy, though you should keep in mind that as far as his judgment was concerned, he also once had his wife balance a glass of gin on her head, then proceeded to shoot her in the forehead instead of hitting the glass. And Mark Mothersbaugh of Devo once said in an interview, apparently in all seriousness according to the interviewer: "You probably know this very well, but your orgone energy goes out the top of your head and it dissipates out the top, but if you wear an energy dome it recycles that energy." Take that one with a grain of salt as well, considering this is the man who's responsible for Devo. (Perhaps by some sort of cosmic coincidence, the "Whip It" video features a woman shooting a can of beer out of a man's hand.)

The FDA's assault on orgonomy may seem radical, but it was fulfilling its charge: protecting the American people from quackery. You can believe that the sky is blue because of orgone energy all you like, but as soon as you start promising miraculous cancer cures, you're setting



off down a wildly irresponsible and dangerous road. Like with homeopathy or any other number of medical pseudosciences, promising a ridiculous cure is putting lives at risk, when those patients should be utilizing the very real and very effective treatments of modern medicine.

So if you want, you can go ahead and build that Orgone Energy Accumulator and use it as a wardrobe or something. Just be sure you only hang blue stuff in there. Wouldn't want all that energy to ruin your whites.

> Browse the full Fantastically Wrong archive here. Have a crazy theory or myth you want me to cover? Email matthew_simon@wired.com or ping me on Twitter at @mrMattSimon.

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DeMeo, J. (1989) *The Orgone Accumulator Handbook*. Natural Energy Works

Gardner, M. (1952) *Fads and Fallacies in the Name of Science*. Dover Publications

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Wild Haggis

The Wild Haggis *(Haggis scoticus)* is a creature native to the Scottish Highlands. It should not be confused with haggis, a traditional Scottish dish made from the innards of sheep (including heart, lungs, and liver). Accept no substitutes for the real thing.

The Wild Haggis's right and left legs are of different lengths (cf. Sidehill gouger), allowing it to run quickly around the steep mountains and hillsides which make up its natural habitat, but only in one direction. Owing to a process of natural selection, there are therefore two varieties of Wild Haggis, one with longer left legs and the other with longer right legs. The former variety can run clockwise around a mountain (as seen from above) while the latter can run anticlockwise. The two varieties coexist peacefully but are unable to interbreed in the wild because, in order for the male of one variety to mate with a female of the other, he must turn to face in the same direction as his intended mate, causing him to lose his balance before he can mount her. As a result, differences in leg length between the Haggis populations have become further accentuated with the passage of time.

How to hunt Wild Haggis

First, be sure to identify whether the creature you are stalking is a clockwise or anti-clockwise variety. Dig a large hole in which to hide and then, as it approaches, leap up and yell, "BOOOO!!" in its face as loudly as your lungs permit (it will be noted that facing in the wrong direction at this point would be rather ineffectual, hence the importance of pre-determining the rotational preference of the intended prey). Correct application will cause the animal to take fright, recoil and turn to attempt to run in the opposite direction, the consequences of which will be immediately apparent. While it is still stunned from rolling downhill, simply pick it up (assuming that you have managed to keep pace with its rate of descent and reach it before it has recovered), whack it over the head with your shillelagh and pop it into your haversack.

Coming soon to a table near you...

Othyr Stuph

Wild Haggis totally exists. There is no way it could be false. Do not question the Haggis.

Retrieved from "http://strangeanimals.wikia.com/wiki/Wild_Haggis?oldid=3896"

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Witch Torture: Christmas Murder in London - Who Forted? Magazine

By Ken Summers on January 6, 2012

whofortedblog.com

Spending Christmas with family can be agony, but for one teenage boy it turned into torture — quite literally.

The Hathaway Crescent apartment building in Newham where the murder occured.

15-year-old Kristy Bamu of Paris, France, was visiting his sister in her East London apartment in Hathaway Crescent for the holiday when the festivities turned to heated argument. Kristy's brother-in-law Eric Bikubi, 23, accused him and his 20-year-old sister Kelly of "being witches or sorcerers" practicing *kindoki* (an African form of witchcraft popular in their native Democratic Republic of Congo) and being a bad influence on his young son because of it. Bikubi was joined by his girlfriend (and Kristy's 28-year-old sister) Magalie Bamu as the accusations escalated into physical attacks. Kristy, Kelly, and their brother Yves, 22, were beaten and deprived of sleep, food, or drink for four days. The three brothers and sisters made repeated phone calls to their parents in Paris, but the father denied knowing exactly what was taking place. When asked by Kelly why she was allowing the ordeal to happen, Magalie told her that all of them "deserved it and that she had no pity for them."

The victim, Kristy Bamu

Before long, Kristy became the sole target; his other siblings were forced to participate in his vicious beatings. He was in so much pain from the attacks with a hammer, chisel, metal bar, and wooden sticks that family members said Kristy was "begging to die." Bikubi ordered all three of them into the tub on Christmas Day where they were showered with ice cold water. It was only then that they realized Kristy wasn't moving or breathing. Paramedics arrived on the scene, but could not resuscitate the young man. He was pronounced dead from his severe injuries and drowning at the scene.

The paramedics counted 101 separate injuries.

Both Eric Bikubi and Magalie Bamu were arrested. Magalie denied any involvement in the fatal beatings. Bikubi admitted to the assaults against the three siblings and agreed to a count of manslaughter "on the grounds of diminished responsibility," but it was rejected by the prosecution. The trial is currently underway.

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The swindler, the cyanide pill and the underwater ballroom: The story behind Britain's most bizarre folly

By Harry Mount for the Daily Mail 05:41 EST, 8 November 2011
05:41 EST, 8 November 2011

The swindler, the cyanide pill and the underwater ballroom: The story behind Britain's most bizarre folly

Britain may play second fiddle to Italy or France when it comes to producing beautiful buildings. But when it comes to playful, quirky constructions, we are world-beaters. Britain is the global home of the folly.

And the people behind these architectural eccentricities — extravagant creations built primarily for decoration and which often appear to be something that they're not — are frequently just as fascinating as the buildings themselves.

None more so than the man who created Witley Park in Surrey. The tale behind it involves not just a staggeringly ambitious, wildly over-the-top folly, but also a tragic Victorian morality story of speculation, corruption, disgrace and suicide.

Quirky: This ballroom was created 40ft beneath a lake at an estate in Surrey and is regarded as Britain greatest folly

Deep in Surrey, near Godalming, lies the village of Witley. A mile and a quarter west, in a ramshackle wood, next to a walled kitchen garden, you'll find a holly tree wrapped around a hut with a door in it.

Go down the spiral concrete steps, and there, 40ft beneath the surface, lies a teardrop-shaped tunnel that leads to Britain's most extraordinary folly — a ballroom, built of iron and glass, beneath a lake.

Leading off it, an aquarium-cum-smoking room was added, where guests puffed on their cigars and admired the passing carp.

Above the domed, glazed ceiling of the underwater ballroom, a yellowish natural light shines through the murky lake water. A giant statue of Neptune stands at the dome's peak, poking above the surface, apparently walking on water.

This underwater ballroom is the last, mad, magnificent fragment of a Victorian fantasy world that made Michael Jackson's Neverland look like a dull municipal park.

To create it, 600 workmen dug out four lakes, swept aside hills that got in the way of the view, and built a 32-room neo-Tudor house which was packed with treasures from across the world, including Italian statues and a bronze dolphin's head so big that it got stuck under a

Domed: The ballroom was made of iron and glass and contained this intricate ceiling that allows a yellowish natural light to shine through the murky lake water

Fantasy: Whitaker Wright created Witley Park in Surrey before he killed himself using cyanide after being exposed a fraudster

bridge on the way from Southampton. (They had to lower the road to get it out.)

Most of this architectural fantasia has gone now. The house, gutted by fire in 1952, was later demolished. A few forlorn lodges and some stables survive.

No one dances in the underwater ballroom any more. And the man who built it lies in Witley churchyard — killed by cyanide poisoning, by his own hand, after he was exposed for a mammoth financial scam that ruined him and dozens of investors.

This Victorian Bernie Madoff was Whitaker Wright, born in Stafford in 1846, eldest son of a Methodist minister. He left school at 15 to become a printer and, briefly, a minister, before heading to America in 1867 to make his fortune.

Within a few years, he had made — and lost — that fortune several times over, investing in silver mines in Colorado and New Mexico.

But however much money he made for himself, it was striking that shareholders never made a penny.
The pattern for Wright's career had been set. One moment he was riding high, coining in millions; the next he was flat broke. Once he'd exhausted his prospects out west, he headed to Philadelphia, becoming chairman of the Philadelphia Mining Exchange and a member of the New York Stock Exchange.

He could hardly have presented a more prosperous figure to the world in 1878 when he married his 17-year-old American wife, Anna Weightman, by whom he had a son and two daughters.

A decade later, his luck ran out again when his Gunnison Iron & Coal Company collapsed, leaving him near-ruined. Returning to England in 1889, he started afresh, promoting himself as an expert in speculative mining ventures.

Packed with treasures: The 32-room mansion Wright built contained items from across the globe. However it was gutted by fire in 1952 and no longer survives

At 16st, with a huge head and neck, Wright was an imposing figure, gifted with the sort of patter that fooled the great and the good into investing in his schemes.

Slick persuasion soon turned to outright fraud. In 1896, he raised £250,000 — the equivalent of £21.5 million today — from trusting investors to back his company, Lake View Consols, set up to dig mines in Western Australia.

Even the name was a con. Consols were government-issued bonds, known to be safe and reliable. Wright's investments were anything but.

Not much left: Little of the original Witley Park remains, but there is still a ballroom under this lake

Walking on water: A large statue of Neptune stands in the middle of the lake atop the domed ceiling, giving an effect that it is floating on the water

As money poured in from gullible backers, so Wright poured the money back out into his newly-acquired estate — Lea Park (later renamed Witley Park), bought from the Earl of Derby for £250,000.

Along with the estate, he also acquired the lordship of the manor, nearby Hindhead Common and the Devil's Punch Bowl, a Surrey beauty spot naturally carved into an enormous amphitheatre.

In London, he picked up a townhouse on Park Lane, next door to Lord Londonderry's mansion. Down at Cowes, he kept a yacht, Sybarita (meaning pleasure-seeker), which he raced against Kaiser Wilhelm II's yacht in the Royal Yacht Squadron race at Cowes — and won.

Blithely ignoring complaints from his neighbours about damaging the Surrey landscape, Wright kitted out his estate with a velodrome, theatre, observatory, private hospital, stables for 50 horses and the crown jewel of his improvements — the underwater ballroom.

He also installed a billiards table in the ballroom, where he loved to play in the flickering light that filtered down through the water above.

'Everything was swagger,' Blackwood's Magazine said of the underwater ballroom and neighbouring developments. 'The whole thing was a gorgeous vulgarity — a magnificent burlesque of business.'
Among the great and the good who flocked to his new pleasure ground was Sir James Reid, Queen Victoria's personal doctor.

However, by 1897, Wright's business was mired in crooked practices. He set up another company, the London & Globe Finance Corporation, and, to lure aristocratic investors, installed the Marquess of Dufferin and Ava, a distinguished former Viceroy of India, as chairman.

Initially, the company flourished as Wright bought the Ivanhoe goldmine in Western Australia and floated it on the London stock market for £1 million (£84 million today). But behind the scenes, Wright was up to all kinds of no good, artificially manipulating the share price and shovelling debts from company to company.

Relaxation area: Wright built this pontoon and conservatory in the middle of a lake, just one of several item he built, including a velodrome, theatre, private hospital and stables for 50 horses

Relaxation area: Wright built this pontoon and conservatory in the middle of a lake, just one of several item he built, including a velodrome, theatre, private hospital and stables for 50 horses

Like Madoff after him, Wright had to face the music in the end. First, he failed to hide a disastrous £600,000 loss (£48 million today) in the new Baker Street and Waterloo Railway; then his mining investments collapsed as a rich seam of ore was finally exhausted.

In 1900, the London & Globe Finance Corporation became insolvent, bankrupting several members of the London stock exchange.

Coincidentally, at the precise moment of insolvency, one of the huge stones at Stonehenge crashed to the ground — an event hailed as a dark omen by the London Press.

Wright's massive losses were finally revealed as the Official Receiver uncovered multiple fraudulent accounts.

In 1903, four days before a warrant for his arrest was issued, Wright fled to New York, crossing the Atlantic under a false name. After an extradition battle, he was brought back to

Play time: Wright had a billiard table installed in the room so he could play with the light flickering through the water

England and tried in 1904. At his trial in the Royal Courts of Justice, it emerged that he'd blown £5 million (£400 million today) of investors' money, and run up another £3 million in debt.

Moments after being sentenced to seven years' penal servitude for faking balance sheets, Wright left the courtroom with his solicitor, Sir George Lewis. In the next-door consulting room, he handed his watch to Sir George, saying: 'I will not need this where I am going.'

After smoking a cigar, he went to the bathroom, downed a cyanide capsule and died within minutes. The subsequent inquest heard he was also carrying a loaded silver revolver as back-up.

Four days after his death, his body was carried to Witley churchyard in a glass hearse.

His dramatic suicide, and duplicitous life, caught the imagination of Edwardian England. Five years after his death, he was immortalised by H.G. Wells in his novel Tono-Bungay as George Ponderevo, a conman who disguises a poisonous pick-me-up as a miraculous cure for all sorts of diseases.

Back in Surrey, Wright's great estate fell apart. Witley Park was divided into lots for sale; Hindhead Common was bought by local residents and handed to the National Trust. After the main house burnt down, the remaining buildings were converted into a conference centre.

The underwater ballroom — now owned by 52-year-old entrepreneur Gary Steele — lies empty. Only the fish remain, forever circling the stately pleasure dome of an infamous swindler.

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hindustantimes

Woman branded witch, stripped and paraded naked

Reuters Bhubaneswar, July 28, 2014
First Published: 17:45 IST(28/7/2014) | Last Updated: 17:48 IST(28/7/2014)

A 60-year-old woman was beaten, stripped and tied to an electricity pole in a village in Odisha after local people accused her of being a witch, police said on Monday.

Villagers in Mayurbhanj district blamed the death of an 18-year-old boy on the woman, saying she had practised witchcraft on him, although medical records showed he died of malaria.

"We rescued the woman and admitted her to a local hospital. She has received head injuries. She is critical," Additional District Superintendent of Police G.C. Mallick told Thomson Reuters Foundation.

"I have never witnessed such an inhuman incident during my three decades of service."

Police said they were investigating Sunday's attack, during which the woman was tied up for around 12 hours, but no arrests had been made.

The practice of branding women as witches and assaulting or killing them is still common is some parts of India, particularly among tribal communities, despite there being a law against it.

According to government statistics, there were 160 cases of murder linked to witch hunts in 2013, and 119 the previous year.

Earlier this month, a woman in Bihar was beaten to death after villagers accused her of practising witchcraft.

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- Wednesday, December 17, 2014

By Cryptozoology News January 12th, 2014

AVONDALE, La.–A woman claims she helped raise a Bigfoot between the years 1964 and 1972. L. Melacetti, 70, says she found the animal when he was a baby, abandoned in the swamps of Louisiana.

"He was so little, so cute. I had to do something about it. He was so defenseless, laying next to the mud and water, curled, crying like a baby, his parents were either dead or they had abandoned him," the ex-farmer said.

The hominid, Melacetti explained, was 20 pounds and had a hairless face that "did not look like a human's nor a monkey's."

"He accepted me as a friend right away. I took him home only for three nights to nurse him back to health."

In the course of those three days, she fed the Bigfoot anything she had at hand, from lettuce and tomatoes, to eggs and goat milk. "And he liked tomatoes very much. He'd take them away from my hands and eat them whole. His favorite ones were brandywine, although he seemed to enjoy the cherry tomatoes too."

After releasing the animal back into the wilderness, it kept coming back to Melacetti's small house. "So, every time he came back, usually during evening, when most people weren't around, I'd give him more food."

She lived in that house as a single woman and had no children, which made it easy for her to keep a secret. "He was my friend. Even though he couldn't speak well, sometimes he'd say words I taught him in English."

Words like "tomato", "food", "love" and "hungry". Eventually, she says, the beast grew up, and one night Melacetti received an unusual but pleasant surprise.

"He brought a friend with him! At first the other guy was shy, hiding behind the bushes, but little by little, he began to trust me too. So there we were, sitting on my porch, two Bigfoots and I, having dinner under the moon."

"When people in town began using them CB radios, the Bigfoots didn't visit as much. Then I had to move out because of my age, but I know they are still there, a big group of Bigfoots. I taught them about hunters and other people that might hurt them and not to trust any humans. I shouldn't be telling you this, but…maybe my old age betrayed me."

Melacetti did not want to give away the location where the alleged events occurred, but she promised that "Bigfoots are real and that they happen to be excellent creatures, docile and better than most people. And by the way, they don't smell bad like some idiots say."

When asked about evidence such as pictures she replied that she has some she keeps in a secret spot. "Oh you rascal, the only reason I wanted to tell you my story is to show the world these animals are beautiful creatures. But I would never, ever, betray my best friends. I have given you a story. Tell it. That's all. Only another person besides you knows my secret now, my friend Maggie who contacted you about it."

She also spoke of not wanting to do any future interviews and asked to be left alone. She is planning to publish her secret journal someday, she said.

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41 Responses to "Woman Claims She Raised a Baby Bigfoot"

1. Tala says:
February 3, 2014 at 7:52 pm

What a wonderful woman to take in a baby Sasquatch person like that! And how great that her family expanded with other Sasquatch people. Thank you for writing this!

If she's reading this comment, please publish sooner, rather than later. The world needs to know from many

different sources that they are another type of human, e.g. they have families, music, culture, and religion. They are not monsters, nor are they a type of gorilla!

Reply

2. GuitarGy says:
February 4, 2014 at 6:52 am

I Grew up in Avondale. 1969-1989. lol i don't remember ever seeing one when i was skipping school, playing in the woods that surrounds Avondale. Wish I had seen one.

Reply

3. Jay Pee says:
February 5, 2014 at 1:56 am

This woman is clearly schizophrenic. Shame on you for publishing her delusions and contributing to the problem.

Reply

- Laura says:
February 5, 2014 at 9:17 am

I don't think so. Not everybody that sees and thinks differently has mental problems. THAT is the problem with assumptions like yours.

I say good for them for publishing it and treating the woman with respect.

Reply

- Jaal says:
February 6, 2014 at 4:47 am

Relax, it´s really not that scary if it were true.
Approach everything with an open mind and a brave heart.

Reply

- Merk says:
February 11, 2014 at 4:52 pm

And you are clearly a psychologist who has had more interaction with her besides a short article.

Reply

- Sam says:
February 26, 2014 at 6:18 pm

You clearly do not believe in Sasquatch…that's OK…many sane people do not. However, they do exist, and her fantastic story does not validate schizophrenia. She may be telling a tall tale, but for what purpose? Again you are not wrong to disbelieve, but I choose to hope it to be a true story.

Reply

- Bob says:
March 5, 2014 at 6:54 pm

Grizzly Adams syndrome. She sounds nice but if I raised one I would never tell any one just arrange to publish photos after my death and mislead people as to where and when they were taken to keep the rednecks wanting a National Enquirer headline. Let them look 2-3 states away.Maybe some idiot shot his parents when he tried to protect him and he was lost and alone. She could be a bored old nutwhack with nothing to do and wanting to feel important or she could be telling the truth.

Reply

4. vlmodcon says:
February 5, 2014 at 9:46 am

I see nothing schizophrenic at all about what she is saying. Perhaps she is relating actual experiences, perhaps wished-for experiences. It does seem that she discusses some unexpected details, particularly the tomatoes. I find her story quite charming.

Reply

- michael warren says:

February 7, 2014 at 11:51 am

No offense, but you apparently are very gullible. Little details in no way verify a story, particularly a story that requires strong evidence. I can assure you that practiced liars throw in many small details. I hope you never serve on a jury.

Reply

- vlmodcon says:

February 13, 2014 at 5:00 am

Mr. Warren: Did I use the word "believe" in anything that I said? I can't find it. I place her story in the great, wondrous reservoir of human communication that can never be fully verified, nor fully disproved. I simply do not "believe" that she suffers from schizophrenia, having dealt with hundreds of patients who do. Do I completely rule out the possibility that she is relating fact? No, I don't. I am more inclined to perceive a lonely woman, who wishes for there to be more wonder in her life, and the world in general, but I cannot know that, and neither can you. Oh, just a few more things. I place you in that category of human who simply can't be honest about their motives. Of course you meant to be offensive…it is your greatest joy in life, perhaps your only joy. I've served on 4 juries, 3 criminal and 1 civil. All of them had what was called an objective chain of evidence and required a far different level of intellectual rigor. You see I have quite a range of intellectual tools upon which I can draw under different circumstances. Attempted murder, embezzlement, corporate fraud and sexual abuse require an entirely different level of analysis from the harmless, charming story of a clearly kind and decent elderly woman. I hope you never have a child, as you will almost certainly stunt his or her inner spirit and sense of wonder. And that is both my genuine feeling, and 100 percent meant to be offensive.

Reply

- Mural Artist says:

February 28, 2014 at 6:05 pm

Well said, vlmodcon! Yours is certainly the more intelligent answer

Reply

- Bob says:

March 5, 2014 at 7:01 pm

AND 4 count'em 4 juries do not make you Siggie Freud. You sound like a Michael Jackson speech outside a courthouse where he is on trial. You big girl you. Or a little Peter Pann dialogue maybe….sheesh. Lifetime of accomplishments served on 4 juries and gullibly let 3 murderers off due to overdeveloped "compassion" gland…LOL….what a loser UR. I'll bet you thin wrestling is real….and political conventions too….and Demmycrats….. LOL.. gotta go to the hospital i cracked a rib …..chortle geech guffaw….

Reply

5. Steve says:

February 5, 2014 at 11:45 am

I can believe her story,, I have had some experiences with Bigfoot that as in similar in nature. People who scoff at the idea of creatures interacting with humans have never been in the woods much and I doubt if they have ever visited the local zoo.

Reply

6. Danny D says:

February 5, 2014 at 3:57 pm

I absolutely love hearing stories like this one..I don't know the woman but I won't doubt what she's saying..Everybody can believe what they want but I just know these things are real and stories like these happens..

Reply

7. Candace says:

February 6, 2014 at 1:05 pm

There is nothing schizophrenic about the woman… I find the story authentic. it is time for you dark ones to stop pestering on such material,,, because we are NOT mentally ill who have open minds.

I take it Jay Pee, you have never worked with the schizophrenic have you?

Reply

8. michael warren says:
February 7, 2014 at 11:53 am

I believe you mind is so open your brain fell out. Are you interested in some beach front property in Arizona?

Reply

- vlmodcon says:
February 13, 2014 at 6:00 am

Mr Warren: You present an odd causality chain. "Mind" refers to the apparently incorporeal set of thoughts, perceptions, beliefs, hopes and other mental constructs that, taken as a whole, seems to define the human self. It is not a physical container. That's called a skull, along with concomitant soft tissue elements that are wonderfully suited to protecting the brain, which seems almost certainly to have some role in either the genesis or the expression of the mind. Ah, I guess you know that. If beach front property existed in Arizona, and I could fly there and see it, I would be quite interested in buying it. While hiking the Appalachian Trail, South to North, I found myself many days completely alone, in deep, almost primeval forest. I amused myself by imagining that around the next bend, in the next clearing there would be a Sasquatch, at which point I would just stop, and enjoy the wonder of such a thing being in front of me. It never happened, but the thought of such a thing brought me great joy. I hope I never lose that ability.Does maintaining a mental game such as this over several thousand miles make me schizophrenic? I don't think so.

Reply

- Mural Artist says:
February 28, 2014 at 6:08 pm

Mr. Warren is outclassed again! Give up, sir, your moron is showing

Reply

- Bob says:
March 5, 2014 at 7:05 pm

AND…..THEN…….I wrote a story…I call it Alice who went down a hole and met crazy people and animals who talked and decapitated people and then I took my medication and now I feel better Mumsie…..then I met a Walrus and a
carpenter walking don the beach…can I have some more laudanum Mumsie?You give me the pooting disease….

Reply

9. Lisa Falour says:
February 10, 2014 at 9:08 am

Her story reminds me of the "woods helpers" or whatever the heck the name is. I read a story about elderly people in rural USA (Appalachia?) who, as they got on in years, if they were all alone, would have little creatures show up to do rather menial chores and help them out. The "pay" was food, and they'd eat outside. They did like beer and otherwise did fine on rather rustic country fare the old people had. A witness had seen one of these and had asked the elderly person about it, and got this amazing story. No way to prove it, but it's a charming story! This one is, too.

Reply

- vlmodcon says:
February 13, 2014 at 5:24 am

That's a fantastic story! I have relatives in that part of the world. I wonder if they have heard of the "woods helpers?"

Reply

10. what ever says:
February 10, 2014 at 10:44 am

What.. Yeah f'n right..?! The first person in the world to raise a "big foot" and she got NO evidence what so ever, no photos, NOTHING..
Sad that this even got an article =P
Don't get me wrong, there might be big foot looking creatures out there in the world, but this is just nonsense..

Reply

11. Amy says:
February 10, 2014 at 11:36 am

My friend has a Bigfoot that comes to visit her as well. She leaves bowl of blue berries out for him. I was there one time when it came to visit and am so thankful for the experience.

Reply

12. Antonio says:
February 10, 2014 at 3:19 pm

Picture's, picture's …. picture's!

No photo's, no Squatch.

Reply

- Amy says:
February 11, 2014 at 12:15 pm

There are plenty of pictures available and DNA from hair samples,yet people still refuse to believe. Seeing is believing and until you have an experience such as mine and others, there is nothing I can tell you to convince you, even if I wanted to.

Reply

- bossmnky says:
March 26, 2014 at 9:30 pm

Picture's, picture's …. picture's!
No photo's, no Squatch.

Apostrophe's apostrophe's apostrophe's! My goodnes's why do so many people's think's they need's to add's an apostrophe for every word's that end's in an 's'? Doesn't do much for your credibility as a commenter. Yeah, I know, it's only grammar but come on.

Reply

13. Confabulations says:
February 11, 2014 at 2:19 am

Ah, dementia.

Reply

14. Howard Thurston says:
February 11, 2014 at 5:10 pm

Lessee…
1. no one ever sees this with her
2. it is a baby and she raises it… it was abandoned.
3. It goes away and comes back with another… HOW did it know where to go to find the others? It was abandoned??
4. There are no witnesses.
5. She has photos, but in a secret place.
6. She won't show the photos but wanted to tell the story so the world "would know how …."

Conclusion- this is nothing more than a nice story. I can do one too: There once was this tornado.. and I rushed in the house, it took me up and I landed in this place where there were these little people…

Reply

- Bob says:
March 5, 2014 at 7:07 pm

I thought I was the only person that that had happened to…..gee whiz!!!!My soulmate..

Reply

15. Pam says:
February 12, 2014 at 6:35 am

If she really believes it then whats the harm?
and who is to say its not true? Just because you don't believe in them does not make it true. If they are real I wish everyone would just leave them alone.

Reply

16. rubin says:
February 19, 2014 at 10:52 am

its just a story,do we really havee to go to the neg on every story that is told….

Reply

17. Tara says:
February 27, 2014 at 1:14 am

For some people it's easier to tear down ideas that to come up with them. It doesn't matter whether her story is true or not. Binary thinkers are thankfully being replaced by open-minded people that don't see the world in black and white. These people don't need to either accept or reject, believe or not believe. They can hold ideas in suspension and wonder. Don't be offended, binary thinkers are merely trapped in an old mindset, they can't help that their minds haven't evolved to the level of complexity required to be creative and expressive as opposed to critical and narrow. They will eventually become nearly extinct and forced to hide in the shadows. Someday no one will believe they ever existed… Just like Bigfoot.

Reply

- Bob says:
March 5, 2014 at 7:14 pm

HEEYYY Blossom Goodchild in the house!!!!I'll bet you don't believe in Jesus do you you open minded person you.I for one id not say it didn't happen but she could not expect discerning people to buy it outright on her say so when she supposedly has photos.It's not about whether bigfoot exists but if her story is credible and some of you sound so open minded that you must wear a doo rag to keep your brain from falling onto the gravel road. Cheers and g'night.

Reply

- bossmnky says:
March 26, 2014 at 9:41 pm

Hey Bob, how's Charm School going? Voted Class Clown Troll yet? :0)

Reply

18. Justin Mcmaster says:
April 9, 2014 at 7:00 am

I may have never seen a Bigfoot, but I believe in the creature 100%. Evidence is all around you. When I read some of the blogs I have to wonder if even they know what they are talking about! I happen to know their diet, migration routes, and many other secrets about them. I also know what color they are in the juvenile years. I know many things about them. Try digging a little deeper into the sightings before making assumptions. I am glad that at least some open-minded people are visiting this website. If your so close-minded why even visit this website?! It appears to me that you might just enjoy ridiculing people in your free time. Amy, thank you so much for sharing your experience. I am actually planning on studying Bigfoot in the wild. Of course I would not tell anybody where I found them. I would not want some hunters and poachers going after it. If I was offered $10,000,000 reward I would still be silent. I do not care about money.

Reply

19. Steve says:
April 23, 2014 at 1:03 pm

In other news a woman who reportedly raised a baby bigfoot was arrested after police found 20,000 pounds of

marijuana she had grown between 1964 and 1972. She had no comment for reporters other than she was realllllllllyyyyy hungry.

Reply

- Uchu says:
April 23, 2014 at 5:19 pm

@Steve shut up, troll

Reply

20. rams says:
August 18, 2014 at 8:53 pm

Cmon people…..Really. The story was okay but she really killed it when she said they all had dinner on the porch like acouple of hillbillies while singing…. Kum ba ya. Oh yeah she also said they eventually went to Woodstock and filled in for Santana when he got sick. Sounds more like the beginning of a good ol'e fashion porno.

Reply

21. Darrell says:
December 17, 2014 at 5:52 am

Amazing that so many people believe this.

The woman in the article is deluded. People who believe her are idiots.

Reply

22. Carl Ambruster says:
December 17, 2014 at 1:55 pm

Seriously? She gets a story for that? That is nothing, when I was younger I raised leprechauns and unicoms. I then taught the leprechauns to ride the unicorns. I fed the unicoms whatever I had around. They liked apples, particularly red delicious . . . and pizza, particularly peperoni and sausage.

I also found a centaur once but it was dead and my pet phoenix was unable to bring it back to life.

Reply

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Woman Snaps Creepy Photo of "Mothman" Through Peephole - Who Forted? Magazine

By Greg Newkirk on November 19, 2012

whofortedblog.com

An image of Mothman snapped through a peephole?

Is this a photo of the often menacing, always elusive Mothman? A woman by the name of Sharon Davis thinks so, after all, she snapped the photograph through the peephole of her apartment. It's so hard to find nice neighbors these days.

Sharon shared the photo with Clyde Lewis of the Portland, Oregon based ***Ground Zero*** radio show. After contacting him for advice on a creature stalking her home, Clyde suggested that she snap a photo and send it in. Too afraid to actually go outside or even look out the window, Sharon grabbed her friends cell phone, stuck it up to the peephole on the door, and snapped this image that appears to show a very tall humanoid figure standing next to her car. Here's what she had to say about the photo:

> The being is boldly and directly looking at me and is not intimidated by me in the least. It was there all night, it orginally was standing at the back bumper of my car and I did take several pictures which shows that it did not stay stationary but did move to the mid section of the car and half in half out.

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This woman's will asks for her pet dog to be killed

mirror.co.uk

- Dec 17, 2014 16:50

This decision has upset many, with people taking to Twitter in a desperate bid to save the dog

Twitter

Bella, the German Shepard whose fate hangs in the balance

A deceased woman in Indiana, USA, has caused outrage with her dying wish - for her pet dog to be killed and buried with her.

Connie Lay asked for her dog Bella to be euthanized, cremated and buried in her final resting place, before she died last November, according to Fox4 News.

#SaveBella - a Twitter campaign

Concern is now growing over the fate of the dog, with animal lovers using the hashtag #SaveBella on Twitter to plead that the pet is kept alive.

> #saveBella How damn selfish could you be?!
>
> — Jamie (@Wisco_girl2) December 17, 2014

> All life should be preserved and not thrown away. Like a selfish request #SaveBella
>
> — Daniel Newell (@LeafsFan115) December 17, 2014

> @FOX59 No! Bella deserves to live. Never should the life of a healthy animal be taken away because of someone's selfishness. #SaveBella
>
> — Linda Cooley (@lyncooley) December 17, 2014

However, there is another side to the story. Lay asked for her pet to be sent to an animal shelter in Utah. Only if this was too expensive, or not possible for another reason, should Bella be put to sleep.

Lay reportedly told attorneys that Bella was aggressive - and vets had previously recommended that Bella should be euthanised.

Reportedly, no one could enter Lay's house for some time after she died, as they were worried the dog would attack.

The Attorney said that everything about the request is legal. He told WCPO that "Outsiders don't have the grounds to rewrite the provisions of my client's will and impose what they want."

What will happen to Bella?

Currently, Bella is alive and well. However, the decision lies with Lay's friends and family, and no decision has yet been made. Bella's fate still hangs in the balance.

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Women Exorcised Money From Clients, Not Demons

By Todd Wright
Monday, May 9, 2011 • Updated at 7:53 PM EST

nbcmiami.com

The only evil spirits Bridgette Evans has the ability to get rid of are her own criminal ways, federal authorities claim.

Evans, a fortune teller in Broward County, has been accused of being the ring leader of a scheme to steal cash from clients under the guise she could ward away evil spirits for the right price, a federal indictment read.

Along with the 32-year-old fortune teller, Polly and Olivia Evans, both of Texas, were also arrested on Friday and charged with mail and wire fraud. It's unclear if the women are related.

From 2007 to 2009, the women bilked $59,000 from desperate clients who wanted to be healed, prosecutors claim.

The women told their alleged victims that their afflictions and bad financial luck was caused by an evil spirit around them and the only way to get rid of the meddlesome demon, the victim should send Evans thousands of dollars.

The woman would then return the money when the spirit was vanquished, but she never did, prosecutors said.

If convicted, the women face 20 years in prison.

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stick insect1

Stick insects have a strange beauty. These slow-moving insects are one of nature's most well-known marvels of camouflage.

And their ilk just got a little stranger: entomologists working for the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences have discovered a brand-new species of stick insect nearly two feet long — the second-longest insect ever discovered.

Pick-up Sticks

Entomologists struck out to Vietnam's Tay Yen Tu Nature Reserve to study Phasmatodea — the scientific name for stick insects. These twiggy bugs are poorly studied due, in part, to the difficulty in finding them. Stick insects live in remote locations, are highly camouflaged and are most active at night.

However, like many challenges, brute force is a viable solution. Whilst beating the trees in Vietnam, entomologists triggered a common fear response in branch-hugging insects: They played dead. The "dead" insects loosened their grip on the branches and fell onto a sheet below where they were collected and studied. (Although this method was used in the study, the record-setting walking stick, according to *Wired*, was technically discovered in a bush.)

Phryganistria heusii yentuensis (above), was found in a Vietnamese nature reserve northeast of the Hanoi.

The record-breaking insect, *Phryganistria heusii yentuenis*, measures 21 inches long with its legs fully outstretched. *P. heusii yentuenis*, like other stick insect species, is sexually dimorphic, meaning males and females are visibly different. Female *P. heusii yentuenis* are roughly twice the size of males, so the record for second-longest insect belongs to a female. Researchers published their findings in the *European Journal of Taxonomy*.

The world's longest insect, called Chan's megastick, was discovered in 2008 on the island of Borneo.

Know Your Walking Stick

Stick insects have devised clever defense mechanisms to

(Credit: Belgian Royal Institute of Natural Sciences)

stay alive in the wild — including, most obviously, looking like a branch. However some stick insects can also change colors or mimic the swaying of a branch in the wind.

Stick insects are also known for their marathon copulation sessions, which can last for several months in some species. Recent studies by other research teams have doubled the number of stick insects identified, bringing the total number of known species to about 70. Southeast Asia is said to host the largest variety of stick insect species, and researchers are certain there are more to discover.

Sorting it Out

The current study focused on more than just collecting and identifying new species: researchers also cleared up confusion regarding older specimens. Since male and females differ so much, some stick insects from the same species were mistakenly identified as two separate species.

The authors of the paper are continuing to collaborate with Vietnamese biologists to expand a reference museum of these unique insects. It's expected the team will double the number of identified stick insects within the next few years.

You'll just have to, dare we say, *stick* around to find out what other creatures are hanging out in the trees of Vietnam.

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X-ray shows knife in 'miracle' survivor's head

upi.com

Man drives two hours with knife lodged in his head

Francisca Pereira, the victim's wife, said his survival was "a miracle."

By Ben Hooper | Dec. 31, 2014 at 9:17 AM

TERESINA, Brazil, Dec. 31 (UPI) -- A Brazilian man who was stabbed in the head with an 11-inch knife survived the attack and drove himself two hours to a hospital.

Juacelo Nunes, 30, said he was arguing with a man at a party in Agua Branca when the other man summoned three friends to help him attack Nunes.

Nunes said he was stabbed in the throat, shoulder and chest before the knife, which bears an 11-inch blade, was embedded in his head.

The knife missed Nunes' left eye and passed through his mouth to the right side of his jaw.

"I did not see the moment of the stabbing, but at no time fainted and remained conscious even with pain," he said.

"I thought I would die and only came to believe when I saw what happened to me, because if someone told me I would not have believed it."

Nunes said he drove for two hours to a hospital in Teresina, 60 miles from Agua Branca.

"The knife passed through several nerves and veins, structures that can quickly kill a patient," hospital director Gilberto Albuquerque said.

Francisca Pereira, Nunes' wife, said she was shocked when she saw what had happened to her husband.

"I did not believe when I saw my husband like that," said. "I thought he was going to die. It was a miracle."

A woman survived a similar incident in San Pedro Town, Brazil, in October. Alcileide Rodrigues dos Santos, 22, was found on a bench with the large knife protruding from her right eyebrow. She survived the injury and was able to identify a suspect in her attack

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Rats suffer a lot of indignities. Persecution by cats. Forced maze running. Experimental conditioning. Gene splicing. Cosmetic testing with a summer color pallete when everyone knows they are an autumn. It's almost more than any self-respecting vermin can take. From poisons to pipers to poems, mankind has invested a lot of effort in the attempted eradication of the humble Rattus genus, but rats were here before us, and rats will be here long after we're gone, no matter how badly we screw up the ecosystem. Case in point, when we started exploding nuclear bombs on the western Pacific atoll of Engebi, and more or less wiping out all flora and fauna, scientists who inspected the island several years later confirmed that everything from the soil to the plants to the local marine life were still dangerously radioactive and ready to give up the ghost, if they survived at all. Except the rats, who seemed to be thriving. "Not maimed or genetically deformed creatures, but robust rodents so in tune with their environment that their life spans were longer than average" (Hendrickson, 1983, p1). Over the millennia, we've tried reasoning with the rat. We've tried subsidizing the genocidal aggression of cats. We've even tried reading them poetry. Shakespeare pointed this out when *As You Like It*'s Rosalind noted, "I was never so be-rhymed since, Pythagoras' time, that I was an Irish rat, which I can hardly remember", mentioning the traditional Celtic method of rat control that involved reciting rat-friendly poems to entice the furry fiends to find other homes. As rats have routinely ignored our protestations, over time we have on occasion resorted to the dubious alternatives of notarized letters to legal (and ecclesiastical) prosecution. The rats invariably refuse to cut a deal.

As many of our attempts to eradicate the rat over the years have met with abject failure, at least in medieval France, Ireland, Scotland, and England we have attempted to drive them to suicide by forcing them to endure bad poetry. A popular charm from Scotland believed to be helpful in evicting rodents from a home was, "Ratton and mouse/Lea' the puir woman's house/Gang awa' owre by to 'e mill/And there ane and a' ye'u get your fill". Quite predictably, the literary aesthetics of rats are not particularly well-developed, and thus this incantation was not known to be overly effective. As we often do when things don't go our way, humans turned to the courts, at least in 16th Century France. 16th Century Burgundy was having a bit of a problem with rats wreaking havoc on the local cash crop of barley. Judicial proceedings were initiated, but unfortunately, then as now, there is always a lawyer willing to take up the cause of the rats. Enter Bartholomew Chassenee.

It is said that Bartholomew Chassenee, a distinguished French jurist of the sixteenth century (born at Issy-l'Eveque in 1480), made his reputation at the bar as counsel for some rats, which had been put on trial before the ecclesiastical court of Autun on the charge of having feloniously eaten up and wantonly destroyed the barley-crop of that province. On complaint formally presented by the magistracy, the official or bishop's vicar, who exercised jurisdiction in such cases, cited the culprits to appear on a certain day and appointed Chassende to defend them. In view of the bad repute and notorious guilt of his clients, Chassenee was forced to employ all sorts of legal shifts and chicane, dilatory pleas and other technical objections, hoping thereby to find some loophole in the meshes of the law, through which the accused might escape, or

at least to defer and mitigate the sentence of the judge. He urged, in the first place, that inasmuch as the defendants were dispersed over a large tract of country and dwelt in numerous villages, a single summons was insufficient to notify them all; he succeeded, therefore, in obtaining a second citation, to be published from the pulpits of all the parishes inhabited by the said rats. At the expiration of the considerable time which elapsed before this order could be carried into effect and the proclamation be duly made, he excused the default or non-appearance of his clients on the ground of the length and difficulty of the journey and the serious perils which attended it, owing to the unwearied vigilance of their mortal enemies, the cats, who watched all their movements, and, with fell intent, lay in wait for them at every corner and passage. On this point Chassenee addressed the court at some length, in order to show that if a person be cited to appear at a place, to which he cannot come with safety, he may exercise the right of appeal and refuse to obey the writ, even though such appeal be expressly precluded in the summons. The point was argued as seriously as though it were a question of family feud between Capulet and Montague in Verona or Colonna and Orsini in Rome (Evans, 1906, p18-19).

It would seem that not even the weight of the judiciary could be brought to bear on rats, as numerous legal precedents were set that precluded their appearance in court. We lost hope of ever truly ridding ourselves of the rat, as he has clearly outwitted and outmaneuvered us over the years. The sad truth is that we were forced, even in early 19th Century New England to address plaintive missives to them requesting their departure, and suggesting specific lodgings they might consider for more luxurious accommodations, and failing that made empty threats that the rats simply mocked, as they have for thousands of years.

In New England, as well as in other parts of the United States, it is still believed, by certain persons, that if a house is infested with rats, these can be exiled by the simple process of writing them a letter, in which they are recommended to depart, and make their abode in another locality. The letter should indicate precisely the habitation to which they are assigned, and the road to be taken, and should contain such representations of the advantages of the change as may be supposed to affect the intelligence of the animal in question. This method of freeing a house from its domestic pests is well known, but is commonly regarded as a jest. As in most such cases, however, what is supposed to be mere humor is, in fact, the survival of a perfectly serious and very ancient usage. This custom, still existing in retired places, is illustrated by the following document, the genuineness of which may be relied on. The country house of a gentleman, whose permanent home in Boston, being infested by rats, the owner proposed to use poison; but the care-taker, who was in charge of the empty house, represented that there was a better way, namely, to address an epistle to the creatures; he prepared a letter, of which the following is a reproduction: "Maine, October 31,1888. Messrs. Rats and Co., — Having taken quite a deep interest in your welfare in regard to your winter quarters I thought I would drop you a few lines which might be of some considerable benefit to you in the future seeing that you have pitched your winter quarters at the summer residence of No. 1 Seaview Street, I wish to inform you that you will be very much disturbed during cold winter months as I am expecting to be at work through all parts of the house, shall take down ceilings, take

up floors, and clean out every substance that would serve to make you comfortable, likewise there will be nothing left for you to feed on, as I shall remove every eatable substance; so you had better take up your abode elsewhere. I will here refer you to the farm of No. 6 Incubator Street, where you will find a splendid cellar well filled with vegetations of (all) kinds besides a shed leading to a barn, with a good supply of grain, where you can live snug and happy. Shall do you no harm if you heed to my advice; but if not, shall employ 'Rough on Rats'" (Newell, 1892, p22-23).

Yet rats remain steadfast despite outright warfare, the application of the occult, appeals to the legal system, and the last resort, asking nicely. They know our threats are impotent. They eat almost anything, have extraordinary birth rates, and gnaw through concrete and steel sheeting. They sneer at us from subway tracks and sewers, rifling through our garbage (filing incriminating materials for later use, if we attempt to use the courts against them ever again). We are powerless before the rat, and one day he may use our own techniques against us. Heed the words of Dimitris Mita who warned, "The flute of the Pied Piper of Hamelin has never left us and it is essential that we train our ear to detect its false notes because in our case the flute is being played by the rats".

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The Tree of Zaqqum (2012), Artist Name:Homa. Reference Al Quran; 37 سورة الصافات - Verse 64-65 Al Quran. This tree is the food of dwellers of Hell-fire mentioned in the Quran.

According to Islam, **Zaqqum** (Arabic: زقوم) is a tree that will grow in Jahannam (Hell). Its dwellers are compelled to eat Adh-Dhari, bitter fruit, to intensify their torment (Qur'an 69:36-37). The Khati'un may eat only the fruit or Ghislin (foul pus from the washing of their wounds) (Qur'an 69:36). Its fruits are shaped like devils' heads (Qur'an 37:62-68). According to Shaykh Umar Sulayman Al-Ashqar, a professor at the University of Jordan, once the palate of the sinners is satiated, the fruit in their bellies churns like burning oil. Some Islamic scholars believe the fruit tears their bodies apart and releases bodily fluids. The Qur'an says:

> [44.43] Surely the tree of the Zaqqum,
> [44.44] Is the food of the sinful
> [44.45] Like dregs of oil; it shall boil in (their) bellies,
> [44.46] Like the boiling of hot water.[1]

The name *zaqqum* has been applied to the species *Euphorbia abyssinica* by the Beja people in eastern Sudan.[2] In Jordan, it is applied to the species *Balanites aegyptiaca*.[3] In Turkey, zaqqum (zakkum) is Nerium oleander.

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Zenobia, the Warrior Queen of Palmyra, Syria

1 January, 2015 - 22:18

In 30 BC, the last active Ptolemaic queen of Egypt, Cleopatra VII, was dead. According to the written sources, she committed suicide by holding a poisonous snake to her breast, so as to avoid being paraded in Rome by the victorious Octavian (known as Augustus after 27 BC), although this account is also disputed. The humiliation of being paraded by the conquering Romans was a fate that befell another 'Eastern' queen three centuries after the death of Cleopatra. According to the *Historia Augusta*, the Palymerene queen, Zenobia was captured by the emperor Aurelian and paraded through the streets of Rome in gold chains and jewellery during his triumph parade. Who was this Zenobia, and why was she treated by the Romans in such a manner?

Queen Zenobia before Emperor Aurelianus by Giovanni Battista Tiepolo

Queen Zenobia before Emperor Aurelianus by Giovanni Battista Tiepolo (Wikimedia Commons)

Zenobia was born around 240 AD in Palmyra, at that time a Roman province. As she was given the name Julia Aurelia Zenobia, it can be said that she was a Roman citizen. Roman citizenship was granted to her father's family at an earlier date, perhaps during the reign of Marcus Aurelius in the latter part of the 2nd century AD. The *Historia Augusta* even makes the claim that Zenobia's father could trace his lineage to Julia Domna, the wife of the emperor Septimius Severus.

By 258 AD, she was married to Septimius Odaenathus, an influential member of Palmyrene society. The exact position of Odaenathus, however, is slightly unclear. Whilst Odaenathus was honoured with Roman titles, thus making him a sort of 'Roman governor of Palmyra', he was also retrospectively given the title 'King of Kings'. The latter title, however, may not be an indication that Odaenathus desired to carve an independent kingdom for himself, as it was conferred onto him for his defeat of the Sassanian king, Shapur.

Regardless of Odaenathus' role in Palmyra, he was dead by 267 AD. Odaenathus and Hairan, his son from his first wife, were assassinated. According to some sources, their deaths were engineered by Zenobia herself, so as to allow her to seize power. This view, however, has been rejected by modern scholars, as it was the Emperor Gallienus who was responsible for Odaenathus' death. Nevertheless, Zenobia's son, Vaballathus, became king of Palmyra, whilst Zenobia ruled as regent. As Rome was

gripped by the Crisis of the Third Century, it was the perfect opportunity for Zenobia to extend Palmyrene rule.

Coins depicting Zenobia. 271-272 AD. (Wikimedia Commons)

Coins depicting Zenobia

In 269/70 AD, Zenobia sent her general, Zabdas, to claim the Roman province of Egypt as her own. With help from their Egyptian ally, Timagenes, the Palmyrenes were able to defeat the Roman prefect of Egypt, Tenagino Probus and his army. To consolidate her position in Egypt, she claimed that she was a descendent of Cleopatra. Like the Ptolemies, Zenobia was a patron of scholarship, and even during her early reign, surrounded her court with intellectuals and philosophers. Following the conquest of Egypt, Zenobia then marched her army into Anatolia, conquering Roman territory as far west as Ancyra. Subsequently, she conquered Syria, Palestine and Lebanon using a blend of military might and ideological propaganda.

'Zenobia' by Carlo Antonio Tavella (1668–1738). (Wikimedia Commons)

Zenobia by Carlo Antonio Tavella

Initially, the Palmyrene Empire was recognised by the new Roman emperor, Aurelian, who was occupied with the campaign against the Gallic Empire in the west. This recognition is evident in Palmyrene 'Imperial' coinage struck in Antioch, which showed that Vaballathus and Aurelian were of equal rank. At the last moment, however, Aurelian's name disappears from the coins, and only that of Vaballathus and Zenobia remained. Having defeated the Gallic Empire, Aurelian turned his sights on the East. Thus, the Palymerene decision to break away from the Roman Empire may be seen as a reaction against Aurelian. Alternatively, it may also be possible that the Palmyrene decision to break away from Rome triggered Aurelian's campaign in the East. Nevertheless, the Palmyrenes were defeated by Aurelian's army, first near Antioch, and then at Emesa.

Zenobia and Vaballathus then fled to Palmyra, where they prepared to defend the city. It is recorded that Zenobia was expecting aid from the Sassanians. When this failed to arrive, however, Zenobia and her son attempted to flee to Sassanian territory on a camel. They were captured by Aurelian, however, whilst trying to cross the Euphrates River. The fate of Zenobia becomes a mystery after this. One source records that Zenobia and Vaballathus drowned in the Bosporus whilst being transported back to Rome, while another records that she was paraded in Rome by Aurelian, following which she was given a villa near Rome. Yet another source reports that Zenobia was brought to Rome, but never paraded by Aurelian. Instead, she marries a wealthy Roman man. Regardless of the ending, Zenobia's life is indeed an eventful and colorful one that may even rival that of Cleopatra VII. After all, operas and literature about Zenobia's life have been written as early as the 14th century.

Featured image: 'Zenobia's Last Look at Palmyra', by Schmalz. Photo source: Wikimedia.

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